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ABSTRACT

In this Proceedings from the 1999 College Reading Association Conference, many articles reflect on the heritage of centuries and upon the possibilities of growth in literacy learning programs, while others consider meaning making and how these factors can be best incorporated in literacy learning programs. Following the Presidential Address, "Listening to Learners" (N. Padak) and the Keynote Address, "Teacher Decision Making in Literacy Education: Learning to Teach" (G.S. Pinnell), articles are: "Perspectives from Fifty Years of Teaching: A Personal Odyssey" (E.L. Kress); "This Is Reading!" (R.A. Kress); "An Exploration of Reading Attitudes and Literary Character Identification in Third Graders" (B.S. Abromitis); "'Everybody Should Do Literature Clubs': Students Reveal Their Perceptions of the Experience" (D.H. Stuart); "Teaching Metacognitive Strategies to Enhance Higher Level Thinking of Adolescents" (E.H. Kingery); "The Integration of Conation, Cognition, Affect and Social Environment in Literacy Development" (C. Fleener; J. Hager; R.F. Morgan; M. Childress); "Investing in Portfolio Assessment" (L.L. Thistlethwaite; A.M. Ferree; R.A. Radcliffe; B.C. Higginson; J.A. Miller); "Constructing the --isms of Making Meaning" (G. Font and G.G. Hruby); "Philosophical Dilemmas in Undergraduate and Graduate Literacy Programs" (M.W. Strong; S.B. Wepner; M.J. Furlong;,A.D. Wartenberg); "Construction of 'How-to' Books in a Secondary Content Area Literacy Course: The Promise and Barriers of Writing-to-Learn Strategies" (P. Daisey); "What They Know and Believe about Family Literacy: Preservice and Mentor Teachers Respond and Reflect" (M.M. Foote and P.E. Linder); "Constructive Comprehension and Metacognitive Strategy Instruction in a Field Based Teacher Education Program" (M. Fazio); "Field Based or Traditional: Examining Preservice Teachers' Rationales for Selecting a Teacher Preparation Program" (M.B. Sampson; I.L. Raine; D.H. Harkins); "Integrating Language and Literacy through Projects: An Applied Internship Experience" (J.K. Kidd; S.Y. Sanchez; E.K. Thorp); "Preservice Teachers Explore Culturally Responsive Instruction" (J.B. Mathis); "From Theory to Practice: A Qualitative Case Survey of TEFL Peace Corps Volunteers in Armenia" (E. Newton and L.A.

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THE COLLEGE READING ASSOCIATION

LITERACY AT A NEW HORIZON

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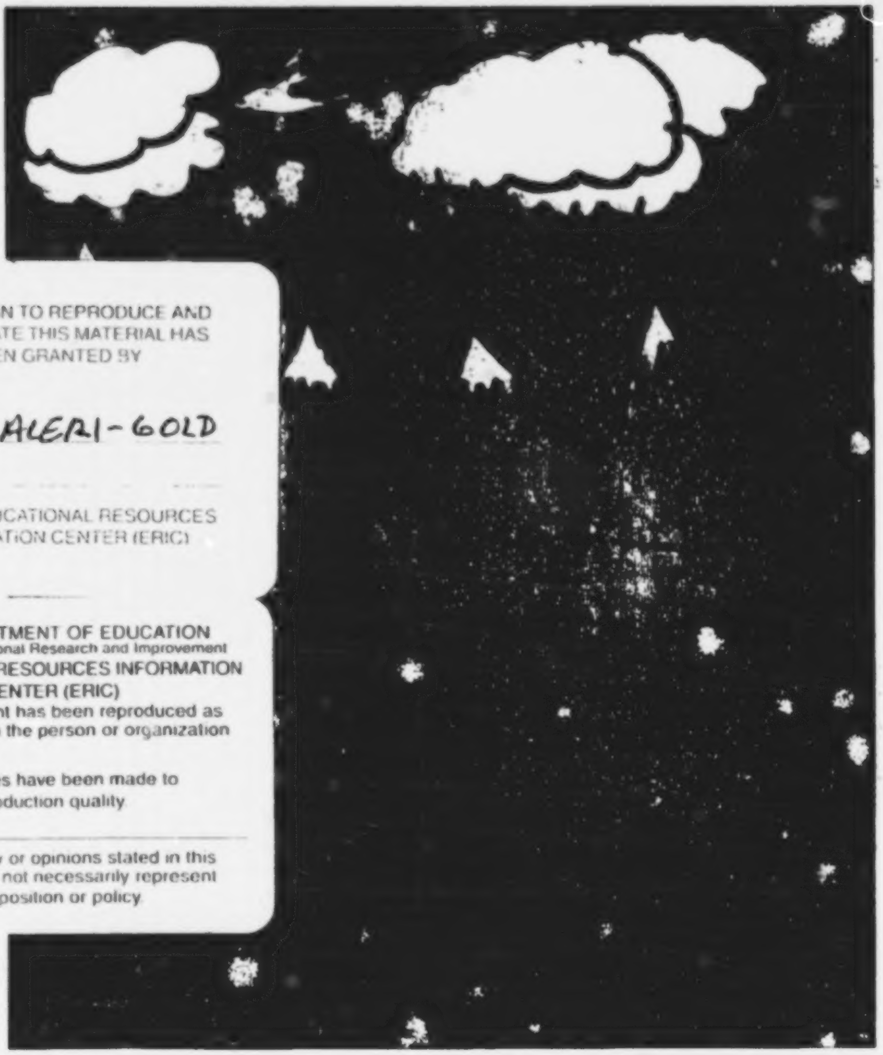

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Literacy at a New Horizon

The Twenty-Second Yearbook
A Peer Reviewed Publication of
The College Reading Association
2000

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LITERACY AT A NEW HORIZON

INTRODUCTION

The 1999 College Reading Association Conference theme, "Literacy for the New Millennium," indicated how we stand on the threshold of the 21st Century. As we anticipate new eras of literacy, we must be mindful of the many centuries of literacy development that brought us to this moment. In this volume many authors have reflected on the heritage of centuries and gazed upon the possibilities of growth in literacy that loom on each day's horizon. The horizons are indeed varied. They depend on the perspective of each reader/scholar. But all examine issues of literacy learning and pose new questions for the future.

When reading these articles, you will see how some authors considered factors that influence meaning making and how these factors can be best incorporated in literacy learning programs. Recognizing that an important horizon of literacy learning rests with teachers of the future, several authors examined projects, programs, and methods to improve literacy instruction in preservice education programs. Others looked at horizons beyond the United States to examine what is happening in literacy learning throughout the world. Time and change continue to affect horizons of technology and educational reform. We, the ones who have chosen literacy as a life work, recognize these horizons transcend the K-12 or even K-16 levels. Literacy is for life; and literacy is for everyone. When we surge past new horizons, let us remember the lessons of the past as we generate questions for the future. And let us do it together in community with our colleagues, our students, our friends, and our loved ones.

It goes without saying that this volume would not be possible without the authors who devoted much energy and thought toward writing the articles presented here. Also, we are especially grateful for the expertise of the Editorial Review Board members who make possible the review and the selection of manuscripts. The selection of reviewers and administrative details are facilitated by the CRA Publications Committee, which is chaired by Michael McKenna of Georgia Southern University. Because the CRA Yearbook is a peer reviewed publication, we encourage all presenters at the CRA annual conference to submit articles for consideration. We are also thankful for the unwavering commitment of the CRA Board of Directors who have supported the editorial team and the publication of the CRA Yearbook year after year. We are indebted to them all.

The editors feel privileged to have had outstanding editorial assistants who were most attentive to the finest details and tracking of the articles. We commend editorial assistants Hemanth K. Jaladhi at Texas A&M University-Commerce, Cynthia Young Buckley, Eileen McCartin, Sharon Kim and Marlene

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At George Mason University we thank President Alan Merten, Provost Peter Stearns, Dean Gary Galluzzo and Acting Dean Martin Ford for their ongoing encouragement and support of this publication over the past six years.

Our appreciation and gratitude is also extended to Garrison Linder who, at age nine, shared his understanding of "horizon" by drawing the picture that graces our cover. Lastly, we extend a heartfelt thanks to our families, colleagues, friends, and readers who have supported our professional efforts with encouragement, acknowledgement, and genuine interest. THANKS!

PEL, WML, EGS, JRD
September, 2000

13.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

LISTENING TO LEARNERS

1999 CRA Presidential Address

Nancy Padak

Kent State University

Nancy Padak is a Professor in the Department of Teaching, Leadership and Curriculum Studies in the College of Education at Kent State University. She also directs the Reading and Writing Center at KSU and teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in the area of literacy education. She has authored or edited books/monographs, has contributed book chapters, and written more than 70 articles on topics related to literacy development. She is a frequent presenter at meetings of learned societies and an active consultant for school districts within Ohio and in other parts of the Midwest. She has also served in a variety of leadership roles in professional organizations, including the presidency of the College Reading Association and (with others) the Editor of The Reading Teacher. She was recently appointed by the Governor of the State of Ohio to serve on the OhioReads Council as the representative for higher education.

I've been fussing with this speech for some time. There's something a little scary about preparing a "Presidential Speech"— it seems a bigger deal somehow. So I decided before beginning to write this thing to seek advice from some colleagues, who also happen to be CRA leaders. First I went to my good friend Tim Rasinski. Tim said, "You know, my dog speech went pretty well last year. Why don't you stick with the animal theme? How about fluency for ferrets or the phonemic awareness of pheasants?" I thanked Tim and went on my way.

Next I emailed our Yearbook Co-Editors, Betty Sturtevant and Wayne Linek. "What should I speak about?" I asked. "Let us think about it," they said. A couple of days later, they replied. "We've checked with the other editors. We've consulted our Editorial Advisory Board. We know what you should speak about. . . . Speak about 15 minutes."

OK, I thought, I guess I'm on my own here. And I began thinking about what was interesting to me (hoping that it would also be interesting to you). I settled on the importance of listening to learners, of trying to see schooling and education from the perspective of those we teach, of trying to improve students' learning by attending to what they tell us.

I've always liked to talk to learners, especially children. I find their views on things interesting—sometimes charming, sometimes sad, always thought-provoking. But I think Jerry Johns may be responsible for helping me see the scholarly value of systematically trying to understand learners' views of education. I remember learning about his "What is Reading?" studies (e.g., Johns, 1972; Johns & Ellis, 1976) during my graduate work at Northern Illinois University. I remember being stunned by kids' views and finally deciding that they were learning what we were teaching, albeit unintentionally. I now believe it's critical for us to listen to what our students have to say. I've studied learners' perceptions of things from time to time over the course of my career, and I want to share some of that work with you today. It seems to me that we should listen to learners because they can tell us both what they know and how they learn best. These are related issues, I think. Students learn when we give them an opportunity to learn. Here's what I mean:

I've been collecting children's definitions of content area concepts—those in science and social studies—to prepare for a course I'm teaching next semester. Here are a few of students' definitions from science—these may give you a new way of looking at our world:

> What is the law of gravity? The law of gravity says no fair jumping up without coming back down. Galileo dropped his balls to prove gravity.
>
> What is the sun? Most books say the sun is a star. But it still knows how to change back into the sun during the daytime.
>
> Explain genetics. Genetics explains why you look like your father. And if you don't, why you should.

Where do children get these ideas? And, perhaps, more important, *how* do they get these ideas? The answer lies in classrooms and the way we organize instruction, I think. Chris Leland (1999, p. 878) explained this relationship eloquently in an article called "A Lesson from the Trenches" that appeared in *The Reading Teacher*. She tells the story of how she learned to listen to learners during her fourth year of teaching fourth grade children.

Students had completed a social studies unit about maps and the globe; Chris felt good about the children's achievements. Then Stephen, tracing the equator on a globe, said, "I understand about the equator when it's over land, but how do they dig the trench when it's under water?" Although startled, Chris asked Stephen to define *equator*. He provided the textbook definition, which used the word *imaginary*, so Chris asked him to define *imaginary*, which he also did. Finally, she said, "And the equator?" Stephen replied, "There's no line where the equator is. . . . It's actually a trench. It's the same for latitude and longitude. They're not real lines either. But how do they get the bulldozers underwater to dig the trenches?"

Chris asked students to consider Stephen's ideas. Some agreed with him; others speculated about other imaginary lines, such as state boundaries. Chris summarized the discussion by moving her finger around the equator and asking the children if they would feel a bump—or even know—when they crossed the equator in a boat. Jane waved her hand in the air and pointed at the social studies text. "Oh, you'll know when you cross the equator! . . . You'll know because a big blast of hot air will hit you in the face. The book says it's the hottest place on earth." Students nodded; Jane's idea made sense to them.

Chris concluded that she had focused on mentally checking off terms that students seemed to know instead of listening and watching to find out what children actually knew. This incident taught her to listen to learners.

So listening to learners helps us understand what students know. And it also gives us some ideas about how and why they have come to know these things. At Kent we always talk to children who enroll in our summer reading program. We want to learn about what they think reading is and what they think readers should do. Sometimes their responses surprise us. For example we worked with a third grader a couple of summers ago who explained her goals for the summer like this: "I want to read a book with no pictures. And I want to be able to read one whole page. And then I want to turn the page and read some more. And I want to do all that before I have to take a breath." After I recovered my composure, I realized that she thought good readers were fast readers.

And then there was the little first grader who was talking to my friend Jane Davidson about what he did when he came to a word he didn't know. He covered up a word with his chubby index fingers and said, "WELL!! I put my fingers over the word like this. And then I pick up one finger and I peek. And then I pick up the other finger and I peek." Jane said, "And does this work?" And he replied, "Hardly ever."

On a more distressing note, our conversations with struggling readers at Kent have led us to conclude that they see reading as skills-based, not idea-based. And saddest of all, they see reading as difficult, beyond their ability, something they cannot do successfully. I have worked with developmental reading students and adult literacy students who have the same views. And these views should trouble us. We know from the rich research conducted at the National Reading Research Center (e.g., Baumann & Duffy, 1997; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997) that being an "engaged reader" involves will as well as skill; we know that self-efficacy, the belief in oneself as a reader, is tremendously (in fact, statistically) important to becoming an engaged reader.

OK, so kids say the darndest things—about gravity, about the equator, about reading and readers. Where do these ideas come from? They come from us. Students learn what they live. And we can listen to learners to find out more about this as well.

We have a Literacy Seminar at Kent—an informal group of faculty, former doctoral students, current doctoral students, and assorted others—who come together every now and then late on Friday afternoons to share research, talk about current literacy events, and so forth. A few years ago, we decided to launch a collaborative research study called, "Students' Perceptions of Learning to Read and Write." It's a large-scale interview study. Each of us has selected a group of learners to listen to— everyone from primary students through developmental education students, adult literacy students, and even preservice teachers. We all use the same interview protocol, which is based on Flanagan's (Patton, 1990) critical incidents technique and which involves three questions:

> "Think of a time in school when you really learned a lot and enjoyed what you were doing. Tell me about it—what did you do? Who did you work with? How did it go? What did you learn? Why did you like it?"

And its opposite:

> "Think of a time in school when you didn't learn very much and did not enjoy what you were doing. Tell me about it . . . and so on."

And a third question—

> "If you could change the things you do in school, what changes would you make? Why?"

I've interviewed more than 80 kids so far, primary-grade students and middle school students. I want to tell you about what 23 middle school kids had to say. These were pretty good students; some of them had been identified as gifted. Here's what they described as their "best" learning experiences:

Long projects. All but two students described an experience that ranged from two weeks to an entire year—making elevation maps of the U.S., making rockets to learn about aerodynamics, studying local history and making a book about it, making bridges out of toothpicks and then testing certain shapes to see how much weight they would hold. I was first concerned that there didn't seem to be too much reading and writing in these experiences, but after more careful study, I discovered that reading and writing had an important role. In fact, there's general cycle that describes how these projects go: First students read, then they do something related to what they have read, then they present what they have learned, which often involves writing. And there's lots of doing and talking throughout.

Also, students like to work in groups. More than half of the "best learning experiences" involved collaborating with others.

Finally, students like to learn new things. They like to learn skills in the context of other learning. Here's Emily: "This year in language arts . . . I found out that mythology was the base of most of the English language. And every day we were told stories about each god and what they did, and what they stand for. I learned a lot. I learned how to tell what words mean just by looking at them. . . . Breaking up words isn't as boring as it used to be. It can be more fun. Words have more meaning than they seem. . . . [The] stories were not even true, but they were so fascinating. And our teacher made it fun, and we ended up having fun AND learning something."

These students were just as eloquent about their worst learning experiences. Eight students described situations where they were "taught" things they already knew. For example, one said, "Well, you learn lots of stuff when you're young, and you keep learning it, in your head. You know it. And they keep teaching you every year. And it gets boring after awhile."

Four students described teachers who do not explain, just assign, or who assign busywork: "Nobody knows how to do it, but she gets busy with something else and then you get really bored. . . . We sorta try to ask her, but the whole class is all confused. And then she gets sorta mad, you know, she just gets mad because she's trying to do stuff and she expects us to know how to do it." "A lot of us had questions, and she would explain it one way. But the way she would explain it was too confusing, so we asked again, and she just explained it the same way and didn't change anything. So we weren't really learning anything . . . we were just confused."

And students REALLY don't like situations where they "just sit"—Just sit and round-robin read out of a textbook; just sit and listen to the teacher read the textbook to them: "You sit in your chair, and you just have to sit there and listen, follow along in your book. . . . It's boring . . . it's really not interesting. I mean it doesn't make you want to learn, just to sit there and read out of a textbook, word for word . . . it's boring and you want to fall asleep." One student described the teacher reading a text chapter aloud: "He never elaborated on anything. . . . His voice, the way he read things, it was almost, he sounded like a robot. It was just carrying on and on and on and on . . . no emotion or anything . . . I don't think that he *understood* that we couldn't understand what he was talking about. And he would just go over it again, like thinking maybe we didn't *hear* it. And if we heard it again, we would understand it. . . . But it didn't work."

Students also had some good ideas about how to change school. It probably won't surprise you to learn that they want more activity, to have fun while they are learning, to find meaning in their learning.

Fourteen of the 23 kids advised more activity in schools. Here are comments from a few of them:

> "I would have more hands-on activities. Because just working out of books, it's real boring and I just feel like falling asleep . . . 'Cause in social studies we read out of the book every day. . . . We have to read it out loud. It takes a long time. . . . He picks people out of the grade book. He just looks for a name and picks one . . . [Q: Do you learn anything?] A little bit, but when you're bored the information doesn't stick."
>
> "I'm sure that if I had more hands-on things, then I would understand it more than just reading it out of a book. . . . 'Cause I mean, yeah, when you do read you put it in your brain and you actually understand. But like I said, if you actually see it or feel it or hear it—whatever—you understand it more. It puts more perspective in for you."
>
> And my friend Robert thinks that just "reading from the book gets boring. And I think it's a little out of date. I think now with the different computers and stuff like that . . . I think even working on a computer would be more hands-on than just book work. I think that book work is stuff that they could do in the 50s and 60s and stuff, but I think they should update it more now . . . so I guess what I'm saying is I think hands-on is more up to date and the book work is more out of date."

Five students had advice about other teaching methods. They want us to teach concepts thoroughly—

> "Because some teachers . . . some of their teaching habits . . . they like go from one thing to another thing and then they just go back and forth and they don't stay on one thing very long and then they come back to it. And it's hard to keep up with them."
>
> "Well most of the bad ones, they think we already know something, and we really don't know it that well. So they try to go ahead, or they assume we understand it and give us a test on it. The ones that are good, they make you think about what you're doing."

All right then. We can learn a lot if we listen to learners. How do students view their reading? As interesting and enjoyable, or, as Robert said, as "stuff they could do in the 50s or 60s . . . more out-of-date"? And what about learning situations? How can we best support students as learners? How can we prepare students for the unbelievable rate at which new information is growing? Consider these statistics, taken from *Healthy Times*, March/April, 1995:

- Information now doubles every 19 months.
- 75% of today's information did not exist in 1974.
- 50% of what we learn will be unusable in 10 years. And, to me, the most surprising of all:
- 90% of today's kindergartners will work at jobs that don't even exist today.

Those are some compelling reasons to listen to learners. Sometimes we'll chuckle at what they have to say. Other times we may not like what they tell us. But it's essential to listen. And to think. And, if necessary, to change.

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS

TEACHER DECISION MAKING IN LITERACY EDUCATION: LEARNING TO TEACH

Keynote Address

Gay Su Pinnell
The Ohio State University

Gay Su Pinnell's professional work focuses on the literacy education of young children and on ways to support teachers of reading, writing, and language arts. An experienced elementary teacher, she has been instrumental in investigating, implementing and developing the Reading Recovery program resulted in the application of research to practice in helping over 500,000 initially struggling children become independent readers and writers. In addition, she has completed several large investigations which have influenced research in the field of literacy education and has produced numerous books and articles, notably Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for all Children, Word Matters: Teaching Phonics and Spelling in the Reading/Writing Classroom, Voices on Word Matters: Learning About Phonics and Spelling in the Literacy Classroom, Help America Read: A Handbook for Volunteers, A Coordinator's Guide for Help America Read, *and* Matching Books to Readers, *all of which she co-authored with Irene Fountas. Co-authored with Irene Fountas and Andrea McCarrier is* Interactive Writing: Bringing Language and Literacy Together, K-2. *Her newest book, co-authored with Carol Lyons, is* Learning to Make a Difference: A Practical Guide for the Improvement of Literacy Teaching. *Her research was recognized by the International Reading Association in 1991 when she received the Albert J. Harris Award. In 1989, she received the Ohio Governor's award for outstanding*

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service to the State of Ohio in education and she has also received the Ohio State University Distinguished Teaching Award. In 1993 she received the Charles A. Dana Award which is presented for Pioneering Achievements in Health and Education. She is a member of the Reading Hall of Fame.

A persistent question in literacy education is: What do teachers need to know and be able to do to assure successful literacy for students? The reason this question reoccurs is that the answer is complex. As literacy researchers, we investigate aspects of teaching and learning. We examine evidence of student learning and construct assessment procedures. We look at text resources and observe how children interact with them while reading. We look at teacher-student interactions and analyze how they support learning. We are always seeking to put together the information that will provide a way for teachers to become more effective in teaching children to write and read.

Teachers' decision making is the foundation of effective teaching. Professional development provides demonstrations of instructional approaches. It is not unusual for a school staff to be bombarded with eight to ten "training" sessions over a school year. Sometimes approaches are part of a coherent plan; often they are not. We can access a plethora of guides, instruction books, and "how to" manuals. Reading teachers are even going on the Internet to share and capture ideas. But the critical difference lies in *how* teachers select and apply the ideas and methodologies they learn.

Likewise, assessment data are available now as never before. In addition to the enormous growth in standardized testing, teachers in many school districts are required to apply observational assessments in a systematic way. These individualized measures yield important data; but, again, how teachers access, interpret, and apply information to teaching makes the critical difference.

Typically, instructional improvement is sought through acquiring new materials. As teachers and researchers in literacy, we are also concerned with text resources. Instructional materials, including books, are available in abundance. We can purchase good texts from publishers if we have the resources. There are "kits" and "reading systems" available to support students. Yet, it is the teachers' ability to analyze and select materials in the light of individual students' needs that makes all the difference. And, many of these decisions are made "on the run" while teaching and, in fact, managing a class of 20 to 30 young children. Others, must be made in the interstices of the day—before school, recess, lunch, planning periods, and evenings. Teachers seldom get long periods of time to reflect. They must react on the spot to individual students' responses; and even if they have a weekly plan, which is usually required, they must replan every day to maximize their effectiveness tomorrow.

At any moment in time, with reference to the individual child, the teacher's decision making process might simultaneously address questions such as these:

- Based on my assessment and the sum total of my experience with him, what does this child know?
- What can he do without help?
- What can he do with my help?
- What does he need to know next?
- Why is this new learning important at this moment in time?
- What kind of help will be most effective for him?
- What kinds of texts can he read independently?
- What kinds of texts will support his learning more?
- How can I assure that he is constructing knowledge of a *process* that he can apply in many other situations?
- Does he understand what I am asking him to do in this instructional situation?

Now, multiply those decisions by the number of children in the group or class. The teacher might be asking:

- What strengths are common across this group or class?
- What do *most* of the children need to learn next?
- Do I need to form groups with similar behaviors? Or, can I work with the whole class to teach a certain skill?
- How can I structure the social context so that learning is maximized?
- What can children do independently that will result in productive learning [so that I can work with an individual or small group]?
- Should I provide demonstration or direct instruction; or should I structure the context so that children make their own discoveries?
- What kinds of texts will support all the children in the class?
- How can I make my instruction efficient so that I can support all students in the class?
- How can I interact with the class, groups, and individuals to assure that students learn *processes* that they can apply in many other situations?

The questions above reflect only a portion of the decisions that teachers make on a daily basis. I have not even mentioned the management of schedules, materials, and record-keeping, nor the interactions and negotiations with other adults that are required. It is no wonder that new teachers are so often overwhelmed. The decision making is constant and demanding.

Guided Reading

To examine teacher decision making, I have selected one instructional context—guided reading. I have chosen guided reading because it is an intensive instructional setting in which teachers become highly aware of their own decision making processes. I'll define and describe that context and then discuss some of the critical decisions teachers make. Finally, I'll describe what we have learned about supporting teachers in their decision making.

First, guided reading is situated within a comprehensive literacy program, of which it is only one component. For about 10 to 30 minutes per day, a child participates in *small group* reading instruction that is organized, structured, planned, and supported by the teacher. Children in the group are similar in their reading behaviors and read about the same level of text.

During the rest of the day, that same student will participate in whole-group, small-group and individual activities related to a wide range of reading and writing, almost all of which involve children of varying experience and abilities.

Guided reading is an integral component of a rich language and literacy instructional support system. The system includes experiences with literature through shared reading, hearing stories and informational pieces read aloud, and supported study. It includes workshops and projects, shared writing, and word study through phonics and spelling. The components are not separate elements but are linked together by:

- the oral language that surrounds, supports, and extends all activities; and,
- the content or topic of focus.

Children need to read and write about something interesting to them. After all, prior experience is, perhaps, *the* important factor in reading comprehension. So, students need experiences that help them store knowledge of their world as well as literary knowledge. Guided reading makes the whole process come alive with purpose because it involves teacher support to help students access and use personal, world, and literary knowledge. There is a dynamic and ongoing connection between the broader literacy curriculum, skills instruction, and the guided reading lessons that are taught every day.

Second, guided reading matches books to readers. Young children are building the network of understandings that make up a reading process. Children develop successful processing strategies as they learn to read for meaning. When children are reading books they *can* read, they are able to use many different sources of information in a smoothly operating system—doing all of those things that good readers do.

Terms like "hard" and "easy" are always relative. Using observation and assessment, we learn to know the readers, so any text can be hard, easy or just right. Our goal is the "just right" text. If a text is too hard, children struggle. They lose meaning and may conclude that reading just doesn't make sense. If their reading doesn't sound like language, they may begin to think that reading is just saying one word after another. Laborious reading is difficult to listen to, frustrates children and teachers, and promotes children's practicing ineffective and inappropriate reading behaviors.

What about books that are easy? They have a place in the literacy curriculum. We need easy books to promote enjoyment, practice, and fluency. Easy reading gives children "mileage" as readers and builds confidence; they can automatically, or almost automatically, use their current skills. But expanding their skills—"upping the ante" in reading—requires engaging in some problem solving. That means reading books that provide just the right amount of challenge—not too easy and not too hard. For guided reading, we need books that are "just right." The reader must be able to process or read the text well:

- Using knowledge of what makes sense, sounds right, and looks right—simultaneously—in a smoothly operating system.
- Knowing or solving most of the words quickly with a high level of accuracy.
- Reading at a good rate with phrasing and intonation (that is, putting words together in groups so that the reading sounds like language).

Matching books to readers means finding texts that provide just enough challenge to engage readers to work out problems or learn new strategies. The goal is not just to learn new words and add them to a reading vocabulary, although that will inevitably happen. It's about the processing, the "working out," that helps readers learn the skills and strategies that will make them gain independence—strategies that they can apply again and again as they read other texts. The "just right" book provides the context for successful reading and enables readers to strengthen their "processing power."

Third, guided reading helps children use what they know about letters, sounds, and words. Readers use visual analysis to solve words, and they can do so in isolation, but that is not how it happens in reading. Readers work on words embedded within continuous text. Word solving involves the orchestration of complex strategies that access many different kinds of information. It is not simply a process of looking at individual words, in a string, and solving one at a time. The words are part of a language system that involves meaning, world experience, grammar, or syntax, as well as visual patterns and their relation to sound and meaning. Our task as teachers is to help readers coordinate these understandings and behaviors while reading continuous text.

Fourth, guided reading provides the opportunity for systematic, organized teaching and learning.

1. Children are organized into small groups who demonstrate similar reading behaviors and who read about the same level of text. This grouping makes it possible to select the right text and teach effectively.
2. Books are selected from a collection organized into a gradient of difficulty. Teachers can select the right level and, within that, select texts that support their teaching. The gradient of difficulty moves:
   - from fewer lines of text, large print, and very clear space, to more lines with smaller print and smaller spaces;
   - from a few easy, high-frequency words, to a more difficult and wider range of high-frequency words, to complex sentences with all categories of words in the language;
   - from many phonetically regular words to irregular words with more difficult spelling patterns;
   - from words with fewer syllables to texts with many more multisyllable words; and;
   - from simple, everyday concepts to more specialized words, often used figuratively, with many meaning connotations, or connected to a kind of technology that requires specialized knowledge.
3. The teacher introduces the text, providing a framework of meaning, language, and visual information to help students successfully process the text, which is new to them. The book introduction usually includes some attention to the visual information in words.
4. The children read the whole text or a unified part of a text softly to themselves rather than in unison. In guided reading, each group member reads it all; and, over time, that means that everyone reads a lot. This reading involves processing a text in a way that helps to build effective strategies. The teacher observes and supports reading in a way that reminds students to use effective strategies such as searching for meaning, taking words apart, and so on.
5. After the children finish reading, the teacher revisits the text to make some brief teaching points directly related to reading the text. This teaching might be related to any aspect of reading—comprehension, fluency, self-monitoring, or self-correcting. Teachers reinforce effective strategies or teach new skills that children can use while reading more books.
6. Additional time (about a minute or two) is spent on extended letter and/or word work that has nothing to do with the text read in the lesson but is connected to principles students need to learn. Explicit word work is a temporary measure for specific groups of children,

who need more help in word solving. The teacher uses magnetic letters and/or the white dry-erase board or easel and paper.

7. Often, the teacher engages children in follow-up activities that help them use the print in different ways—using writing or art. This follow-up extension is an ideal way to help children develop skills of summarizing, extending meaning, analyzing aspects of text, interpreting text, using graphic organizers to discover the structure of text—all skills that are essential and also are tested on those proficiency exams.

Fifth, guided reading gives young readers the chance to explore a wide range of texts that they will enjoy and be able to read. In reading, experience counts; and experiences you enjoy count the most. As we struggle to provide intensive skills instruction, we can not forget that we learn more through meaningful and enjoyable experiences. The work is not necessarily easy. Meeting a challenge makes for better learning.

Most early books in a guided reading collection are not recognized literature because we have been careful to provide support for children's learning high frequency words. These books support beginning readers. These books are childlike and accessible; they start young readers along the way.

As readers build strength, they encounter a wider variety of texts. A good guided reading program will include fantasy, realistic fiction, biography, autobiography, history, science, and other genres. All the time, children are learning "how to" read this wide variety of text. Some selections will be "short reads" (articles or short stories). We also may include complex, hard-to-read picture books, the equivalent of short stories for elementary age children. There's an opportunity in guided reading to teach children how to look for plots within plots, literacy devices such as flashbacks, how authors use paragraph organization and side headings, and how to read diagrams and charts. Some are much longer "chapter books" that will build readers' stamina.

The teacher's goal in teaching is to help children learn generative processes that they can apply in many ways. The do acquire specific pieces of information—letter-sound relationships, words, characteristics of genre—but at the same time, they must be "learning how to learn." We can not directly teach the "in-the-head" strategies that we want the learner to develop; but our interactions with children can support this kind of generative learning (Clay, 1991).

In guided reading, the teacher is constantly balancing the difficulty of the text with the way he or she supports children in reading the text. A text is selected for a small group of children who are similar in their reading behaviors at a particular point in time. In general, the text is about right for children in the group. The teacher introduces the story to the group, supports individuals through brief interactions while they read, and guides them to talk together afterwards about the ideas and words in the text. In this way, teaching works to refine text selection and help individual readers, through their reading, to move forward in the development of a reading process. A key to supporting reading is the selection of books that are not too easy, yet not too hard, and that offer a variety of challenges to help readers become flexible problem-solvers.

Teacher Learning

Go back to the complex series of decisions presented earlier and then map those decisions onto an instructional context like guided reading. You will come up with a challenging task for the teacher. How do teachers acquire complex understandings about the learning and teaching processes and learn to use their knowledge effectively? For every learner, systems are connected. As we acquire new knowledge, we build a network of understandings to support the new learning. That is true of our students as well as ourselves. We constantly use our prior knowledge to make sense of and acquire new knowledge.

Teacher education starts young teachers on their way, but it would be impossible to design an educational program that would enable every individual to effectively accomplish superb teaching. In saying this, I realize that there will be exceptional individual new teachers who have had extensive experiences in working with people—both children and adults—and have developed some of the cognitive processes necessary for effective teaching. Most new teachers, however, continue to need support as they acquire the experience and knowledge essential for good teaching.

Starting them on their way and supporting their continuing development means enabling teachers to learn from their own teaching. A young child approaching a literacy task such as writing a story, for example, may compose using oral language knowledge and familiar experiences. The child will then be faced with the task of writing words. In the process of writing a message, the child must remember what he wants to say while attending to the construction of words. He may use letter-sound knowledge; he may connect the word he wants to write to words he already knows. The process requires him to keep the message in mind while shifting down to the word and to the letter-sound level. Writing the word requires even more skill as he has to remember the directional movements required to write the letters in a word, one after another.

Through all of this processing, teachers are carefully observing and analyzing behavior. The process is not linear; thinking is going on at many levels. Here are some of the actions involved (also see Lyons & Pinnell, 1999):

- *Observe.* The teacher's most powerful tool is observation of students' behavior. This observation is strengthened by systematically applied assessments, and learning to use such procedures is a staple of teacher education and professional development. The key to effective teaching, however, is the internalization of observation skills. Assessment is ongoing as an integral part of teaching. Teachers are always thinking about alternative explanations for children's behavior, and this thinking helps to build a theory of learning. Through observation, the teacher continues to test theory against the specific behaviors of the children. For example, a teacher observing children's reading behavior might notice whether the child makes attempts at words and what kinds of information the reader is using in those attempts.
- *Probe.* Interacting with students is the way to gather more information about their processing. Internalizing observational techniques equips teachers with the kinds of questioning skills that will help them learn more about children's thinking. It is possible to generate alternative hypotheses. For example, the teacher might question the child during reading, asking, "why did you stop?" Or, "what would make sense there?" The child's responses provide more information.
- *Select hypotheses.* Based on background experience, teachers narrow the focus to probable explanations for students' behavior. For example, the teacher might decide that the child is neglecting visual information or needs to check letter-sound information against meaning.
- *Test hypotheses.* Teachers interact with students based on the theory of behavior. It takes time for young teachers to amass the background experience necessary to interpret students' behavior and interact in a way that would take them further in building a reading process. If reflection is a regular part of teaching, experience will help build the individual repertoire.
- *Reassess.* Observational skills are essential to tell us as teachers whether or not instructional interactions were effective. For example, a teacher who interacts with students to support fluency and phrasing in reading will expect a shift in the reader's behavior and will observe for the effect. An important teaching skill is observing to detect whether or not the child is engaging in the learning process. If not, the whole cycle of observation and hypothesis testing would begin again.

This process becomes even more complex when applied to work with groups of children. In guided reading, for example, you may have several observations of the children in the group. You may know the kinds of texts they can read (level of difficulty) as well as the typical kinds of behaviors they exhibit. Will they be exactly alike? Certainly not, but there will be similarities. You need to think about what they know as you select a text that you think will be within their control with the support of an introduction. In selecting the text, you are thinking about the supports and challenges in the text. You will have some ideas about what the children in the group need to learn at this moment in time, and you will be thinking about how you can call examples to their attention. The introduction and the moment to moment interactions provide the support readers need not only to read *this* text but to learn something about the reading process that they can apply to the reading of other texts.

An Example

Janet was working with a group of first graders in April. She had observed that as a group, these students

- could recognize and use repeating elements of story structure;
- readily became engaged in a story;
- knew many high frequency words,
- could recognize and use part of words such as endings;
- could apply knowledge of letter-sound relationships to solving words; and,
- knew how to use punctuation such as quotation marks.

She wanted her students to follow a story over a longer, more complex text. She selected *The Hole in Harry's Pocket* (Bloksberg, 1995). She also knew that there would be new words to solve. While she expected students to use pictures as a way of extending meaning, it was clear that this text was far too complicated for the children to rely on pictures for information as to the precise words and message of the text.

In this story, a little boy is sent to the store to get some milk. He takes the money his mother gives him and puts it in his pocket, along with some other treasures, such as a lucky ring, a toy car, and a whistle. On the way, he jumps over curbs and counts cracks in the sidewalks. When he gets the milk, however, he discovers that his money was missing. Retracing his steps, Harry finds some of the articles that were in his pocket, along with the money. Overjoyed, he runs home to his mom, who asks, "Where's the milk?"

This humorous story requires the reader to remember at least some of the articles in Harry's pocket, follow the sequence of events that takes him to the store and on the path back home, predict that he would find the money, and realize the instant that he ran home without the milk. Readers are always, as Adams (1990) says, reading and thinking. The text has some challenges in terms of word solving; for example, words like *lucky, whistle, cracks, shiny,* and *tightly* would likely be new to first graders and could be the subject of some brief lessons on how to take words apart. Our ultimate goal, however, in a story like this one would be that young readers would be engaged in this humorous story. They would understand Harry's consternation at losing the money, predict that when he found the first object (from his pocket) that he *might* find the money, and laugh because they knew that Harry had forgotten the milk. Let's look at Janet's introduction to *The Hole in Harry's Pocket*. Janet's goal for each teaching move is written in **bold** above the teacher's words. The whole interaction has a conversational quality, but it truly is intentional instruction.

Introduction to *The Hole in Harry's Pocket*

Introduces main idea and character. Draws attention to illustrations.

Teacher: This is a story about a boy named Harry. There he is on the cover of the book. He's reaching in his pocket and looking surprised. The title of this story is *The Hole in Harry's Pocket*.

Sherri: He's got a hole?

Invites children to predict based on the title and cover.

Teacher: Yes, he has a hole in his pocket and you know what can happen if you have a hole in your pocket.

Andy: You can lose your money.

Sherri: He's got shorts so it could fall right through.

Provides information.

Teacher: Well in this story, his mom send him to the store for some milk, and he puts it in his pocket.

Andy: Does he lose it?

Introduces title and draws attention to concepts that provide foundation for construction of meaning.

Teacher: Look at the title page. It says *The Hole in Harry's Pocket. You see some things in this picture that Harry has. What are they?*

Sherri: A car.

Jenny: A whistle.

Andy: Is that a ring and there's his money?

Uses specific vocabulary of the text. Provides information essential to the plot.

Teacher: Yes, he might have put some of these things in his pocket—there's a toy car, a whistle, a shiny ring, and the money. Turn the page. There's Harry looking in the refrigerator, and on the next page, there's his mom giving him the money to go to the store. She's telling him something about the money.

Jenny: To take care of it and not lose it!

Teacher: It could be. Turn the page. He's putting the money in his pocket and some other things . . .

Andy: Like his ring!

Teacher: Yes, and on the next pages, he walks to the store. He's hopping up and down on the curb on this page. On the next, he's looking at the cracks in the sidewalk. Maybe he's counting them.

Jenny: That page is like the cover.

Invites personal response.

Teacher: Yes, he got the milk but then he discovered that the money was gone! So what would you do?

Andy: Go look for it.

Jenny: I'd go back home and tell my Mom.

Sherri: He could have dropped it and then he could go back all the places he was and look for it.

Confirms predictions. Draws attention to word structure.

Teacher: That's just what he does. He goes back home and on the way, you'll see that he finds some things. Turn to page 9. There's something on the sidewalk that looks shiny. What would you expect to see at the beginning of the word *shiny*?

Sherri: Like my name!

Teacher: Yes. . . .

Andy: Sh . . .

Models checking visual information with meaning.

Teacher: That's right. Put your finger under the word *shiny*. Does it look kind of shiny in the picture?

Several children: Yes.

Andy: It's the ring.

Uses vocabulary from the story and draws attention to visual information. Connects words to meaning.

Teacher: Yes, the ring is made of *silver*, like this one I have. Two words tell you what the ring is like—*shiny* and *silver*. Find them.

Children locate *shiny, silver*.

Teacher: He thinks that ring is lucky for him, so he is really glad to find it.

Sets the task for the readers.

Teacher: Now you can get started reading this story to find out whether he really got the milk for his mom. You might find something that is pretty funny in this story.

Janet planned to watch carefully to see children's response to this story. She hoped that they would be quick to realize that Harry had forgotten the milk. As she observed, she was pleased to see that children in the group were reading most of the words accurately and that nonverbally they were showing interest in the story. Several students were reading with phrasing, slowing down to problem-solve. One student was reading word by word, and she made a note to work with him on fluency.

She interacted briefly with Sherri to work out the word *lucky*. She showed Sherri the word *luck*, and the child worked out *lucky* by noticing the *y*. She supported Andy's reading of a long, compound sentence, "He held the money tightly and ran the rest of the way home." Andy knew all of the words except *tightly*, but as he stopped to solve the word, he lost the momentum of the sentence and became dysfluent. Janet encouraged him to start again at the beginning of the sentence and read it again, pausing slightly after the word *tightly*, and reading the rest of the sentence all at once. That was the page at which several of the children laughed.

After all the children had read the story, Janet invited them to talk about it. They entered into a conversation in which several children mentioned their own experiences in forgetting or losing something. Janet went back to the word *tightly*, helping children connect it with *night* and to notice the *ly* ending. She used a small dry-erase white board to illustrate:

night

tight

tightly

They ended by talking about when they realized Harry had forgotten the milk. Three children said it was when he got home and two said it was when his mom asked him. Janet demonstrated how she was thinking about the milk on page 13, when the text said that Harry ran home, *holding the money tightly*. She also pointed out how the comma helped her know how to read the text in an interesting way and also to realize that the author was setting an important piece of information that would help her in understanding the text. Janet was helping the students learn how to comprehend a text *while* reading it. She was showing her young students that comprehension doesn't happen at the end of the story; understanding is constant during the act of processing print.

Reflecting on the lesson afterwards, Janet commented that this group of children were just beginning to read and understand more complex texts. She wanted them to follow the events of the story while simultaneously remembering what Harry put into his pocket. She also wanted them (simultaneously) to meet the challenges in word solving that the text offered. Each reader would need to "take apart" several words (not the same for all of them).

Janet had a lesson plan in her mind, although she did not preplan or script her interactions with students. She want to observe students using a range of word solving strategies, for example, using letter sound information, noticing letter clusters and word parts, and connecting known with unknown words. She wanted the students to be able to slow down to problem solve and then speed up again to read with some phrasing and fluency. She had in mind some actions that she wanted to demonstrate. Because she knew her students well, she could select a text that would provide powerful examples for her teaching.

Supporting Teacher Development

The example I have presented shows the delicate balance between observation, direct teaching, and encouraging students to bring their own thinking to a text. How does a teacher educator help a developing teacher refine his/her skills and ability to think about teaching? In my experience, training sessions can provide valuable input, but coaching is the real key to learning (Joyce & Showers, 1980, 1982). Not surprisingly, coaching is the context that staff developers find most difficult. The coach (staff developer) must be just as alert as the teacher to seize the moment and the example that will be most helpful. Coaching sessions can not be totally preplanned or scripted, but there are some general principles that can be followed. These principles might be similar to those described for teachers' looking at children's' learning, although more "layers" of complexity are involved.

- *Observe.* As teacher educators, we observe classroom lessons, noting children's and the teacher's responses, each in relationship to the other. We look for evidence of learning on the part of the children and connect that evidence to teaching moves. We have a kind of road map in the head that represents our understanding of teaching and learning. Observation is the key to what we might bring to the attention of the teacher to help him/her learn from teaching.
- *Probe.* Conversation with the teacher provides the support that helps her/him put reflections on practice into words. The descriptions that arise help both teacher and staff developer to identify the factors in the lesson that make it effective.
- *Select hypotheses.* Together, the coach and the teacher raw inferences about what will support learning for these children. They explore

the decisions of the lesson—text selection, introduction, prompting children while reading, discussion, and word study. They analyze children's behavior and hypothesize what would have made the lesson more successful and/or what the teaching decisions should be in tomorrow's lesson. The coach provides feedback for the teacher's *own* analysis; that is, the goal is not so much to tell the teacher what to do as to provide support for thinking.

- *Test hypotheses*. The coach and teacher agree on some actions to take the next day or over the next few days. Typically, interactions would take place fairly frequently over an extended period of time, so that there would be ongoing discussion of teaching moves and students' responses.
- *Reassess*. The coach and teacher are working together in an investigative process, one that results in multiple levels of learning: the children, the teacher, and the coach. As new learning takes place on all levels, the interactions change. The teacher is discovering how children learn, while the teacher educator is learning how to support teachers in analyzing and improving their teaching.

The goal is to help the teacher become conscious of the examples that arise daily in classroom settings. From these examples, teachers learn how to teach and continuously build their own theories of learning (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).

Principles to Guide Effective Teaching Education

We have learned over the past decade from our work with teachers and staff developers that there is no one way to help teachers learn. Inservice sessions can be good stepping-off points because they provide valuable information and sometimes demonstrations of new approaches and techniques. In-class coaching provides the support and feedback that makes it possible for teachers to put ideas into action and then to reflect on them. Colleague support is vitally important in the entire process. Conversation among teachers can be highly productive and supportive of learning. A process of change, which all learning involves, will not last unless there is the community support of colleagues who are mutually committed to the goals and who support each other (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996). Teacher education is effective when:

- there is a balance between demonstration of specific teaching approaches and the reflection and analysis needed to build the process of thinking about teaching;
- complex ideas are experienced, analyzed, and discussed across a va-

riety of learning contexts—guided reading, writing workshop, reading aloud, etc.

- it is grounded in the practice of teaching children;
- it involves learning conversations surrounding specific acts of teaching; and,
- it is supported by a learning community that shares a language for talking about complex ideas related to teaching and learning.

As teachers share experiences and they talk, listen, and examine teaching together, they are building the community that will sustain their efforts over time (L. Lambert, Walker, Zimmerman, Cooper, M.D. Lambert, Gardner, & Slack, 1995; Lieberman, 1996; Schon, 1983).

Good teaching is not a program you can buy or legislate. It can not be handed down by decree or forced by high stakes testing (Bradley, 1998). Development takes place at the school and classroom level as teachers work out their daily problems. If we, as teacher educators can get next to those problems, give real assistance in solving them, and prompt 0learning in the process, we will have a chance of making the real difference in children's literacy learning.

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EARLY LEADERS

PERSPECTIVES FROM FIFTY YEARS OF TEACHING: A PERSONAL ODYSSEY

Eleanor Ladd Kress

Dr. Kress worked in the public schools of Pinellas County, Florida for 17 years. After 3 years in the classroom, she became Coordinator of Corrective Reading with a staff of 45. Later she moved to the position of the Director of Pupil Personnel Services (which included school psychologists, school social workers, group testing, corrective reading, and special education) and still later she became Assistant Superintendent in charge of instruction. Dr. Kress's first full-time University assignment was at the University of Georgia. She moved to Temple University in 1970 and retired from the University of South Carolina at Spartenburg in 1986. She served on the Board of the International Reading Association and as Historian for the College Reading Association. In 1983 she helped to evaluate the educational system of Pakistan as a senior research fellow with the Fulbright Association.

It has been my privilege to be associated with practitioners and theoreticians in the field of reading for more than fifty years. They are special professionals who are generous, compassionate, patient with learners, creative, inquisitive and incredibly dedicated teachers. I chose my profession well and owe many people much! For instance, in 1950 I wrote to Arthur I. Gates asking a question about the teaching of phonics. By return mail I received a three-page, single-spaced, typewritten response. Equally impressive, Helen Robinson continued to serve as mentor to the Corrective Reading Program in Pinellas County, Florida although heavily burdened at the University of Chicago after the untimely death of William S. Gray.

At age 80 I continue to teach as a substitute in grades one through twelve in Kutztown, PA public schools. Also, I am tutoring five children from Kosovo

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who, thanks to the *Language Experience Approach*, (Stauffer, 1980) are thinking, reading, and speaking English extremely well in six months time.

In the last 52 years I have witnessed fifteen approaches of initial reading instruction come and go. Some made a small splash in a few communities, while others swept the country. My staff and I were impacted to varying degrees by sales people or supporters of I.T.A., (Initial Teaching Alphabet), (Harrison, 1966) individualized reading, Montessori, three different Linguistic methods, *Visual-Motor-Perceptual Method* by Marianne Frostig (1973), Spalding's *Writing Road to Reading* (1962), Slingerland (1971), *Words in Color* (Gattegno, 1962-1963), *Sullivan Programmed Approach* (Sullivan, 1969), *Systems Approach* (Sabatino, 1973), the *Language Experience Approach* (Stauffer, 1980), and *Whole Language Approach* (Goodman, 1986). For a description of most of the approaches listed see Aukerman (1971). He has described more than 100 approaches in his 1971 text.

I hope from my fifty years of experience, I can pass on clues to help readers avoid some mistakes made in the past. First, let us look at our weaknesses. Then I will identify the absolute worst method devised by man. Next, we will look at the most effective approach that I have seen. I will conclude with a critique of the Whole Language Approach currently in vogue and a brief summary.

Weaknesses

As a profession we seem to have a number of weaknesses primarily in our decisions regarding initial reading instruction. These weaknesses hurt children and leave us open to criticism and action by state legislators. Among the weaknesses most obvious are:

1. We continually seek a panacea that will produce easy positive results for each child. As long as a wide range of abilities and personalities exist in our children, there are no panaceas.
2. We seek something NEW. We throw out the old instead of retaining successful attributes. Controlled vocabulary was a useful concept for many children, but it was thrown out with the basal reader. In the early 1950's Edward and Marguerite Dolch documented the need for repetition of the "service" words. Decodable text made it possible for the necessary repetition.
   Sometimes the NEW is only a different label for an old process. New terminology may reveal nothing new upon close examination.
3. We tend to become enthusiastic advocates involving one of two extreme positions regarding phonics. This involves a code emphasis or a meaning emphasis. Perhaps it would help to remember that

phonics is only a *tool*; it is not a *goal*. All aspects of reading should be meaningful from the beginning.

4. We fail to remember what we know about the learning process and listen to articulate proselytizers who ignore fundamentals of the learning process.
5. We fail to remember our history. For example: A reoccurring effort to simplify the learning to read process, through augmenting the alphabet to achieve a closer correspondence with sound and symbol, has been attempted through the years. Usually symbols are added to represent the 44 common sounds of English. Some words were respelled, silent letters were voided, and diacritical marks were sometimes used. John Hart suggested such a method in 1590 (Smith, 1965). In 1902 the *Scientific Alphabet* was proposed. In 1960 the *Initial Teaching Alphabet* or the *Augmented Roman Alphabet* appeared. Problems with the transition to traditional orthography are credited with the short life of these attempts. Surely these attempts should alert us to question anything that deviates from traditional orthography.

Absolute Worst Method

Based upon a stimulus-response theory of learning, the *Sullivan Programmed Reading System* was planned as an individual task which allowed the children to progress at their own rate. For each sequential step, a stimulus was provided. It required the student to write a response and immediate feedback in workbook format, which was provided. The Philadelphia School System was offered the opportunity to test the *Sullivan Program* by the United States Office of Education and they accepted. Thousands of students were handed a series of workbooks with cardboard slides to cover the answers

Learning to read became a solitary, boring task for both students and teachers. The experiment failed miserably. There was no back-up system to rescue the students.

The students were frustrated and became more frustrated as years passed. When they arrived at the Junior High School they found the windows barred, the exit doors locked and an armed police officer on every floor. One day in 1970, as I approached Wanamaker Junior High School, I saw all the furniture from a classroom flying out a second floor window. Undoubtedly, there was multiple causation. However, in working with the students, it was obvious they blamed many of their troubles on their lack of reading skills. It is impossible to calculate the damage done by this one experiment.

Most Effective Method

The Language Experience Approach was supported by a number of predecessors, but Stauffer's (1980) organization of a child-centered system provides the most effective returns. Three kinds of experience charts were to be taken from dictation:

1. Whole class dictations were numbered and put on hangers. They were available to everyone for use in rereading or to check spelling.
2. Dictations were taken from small groups formed for various purposes. Both whole class and small group dictations were duplicated as often as possible. Students were instructed to put their names on their copies, date them, underline each known word, count the known words and put the number of known words in the corner of the page.
3. Individual dictations were taken and kept in notebooks. When the children reread a word correctly three times, they owned the word and were given a card with the word on it. The children's collection of cards grew rapidly and they soon could make sentences with the cards. Boxes were provided for the growing collection enabling the children to alphabetize their collection. Whole group and small group dictations could be stimulated by a visit to the school kitchen, a terrarium, a scarecrow, the making of Rice Crispy Bars, or any other school activity. The individual dictations were usually stories about home and family. Occasionally the dictated story was considered worthy of being bound into a book and donated to the library.

When three words having the same initial consonant were known, phonics instruction could begin. With careful teaching, children were able to acquire the concept that a letter in the same position in a word often yielded the same beginning sound. After a few consonants had been taught students would begin making discoveries regarding the reliability of other initial consonants. I rarely taught the letter "p" and never had to teach"v". The discovery process was a powerful stimulus.

A Criticism

The *Whole Language Approach* is the most notable, current effort to make initial instruction interesting for students (Goodman, 1986). Unfortunately an assumption was made that is not supported by learning theory. No linguist has ever suggested that reading is a natural extension of listening and speaking. Reading is clearly a cultural activity. It may be easier for those who have been read to extensively, but may not be easy for many students. First grade teachers are prone to blame parents if their students do not learn to read easily.

Another basic learning principle not honored by Whole Language Approach, is to proceed from the known to the unknown. Instead of using the child's own words and experiences, students have been asked to read other author's words. Some children may know *The Little Red Hen* (Barton, 1993), but it is a more tenable assumption that the students know more about their own experiences than they do *The Little Red Hen*. See *This is Reading* (Kress, R.) in this issue.

While substituting in a first grade class in September, 1999, a very distressed boy came as close as he could and asked, "Are you a Grandma?" I replied, "Oh, yes eight times." He sighed and asked "What's this word?" I responded, "Transportation, and the next word is museum." My question to Whole Language advocates is "Why with eleven days of school experience, is this young man faced with "transportation and museum?" He has yet to see any of his own words or thoughts in print!

In some schools using the Whole Language Approach teachers were denied permission to teach the rudiments of the sound-symbol relationship.

A good example of harm done by the pendulum swinging is the fact that many teachers are leaving college today not knowing how to teach reading. Listening to the teacher read and reading *The Gingerbread Boy* (Cook, 1987) in unison is insufficient for many children. Teachers need to know how to analyze a task and teach from the simple to the complex, the known to the unknown, auditory to visual and perception to discrimination as well as to take dictation. Teaching reading takes time. I found very few minutes devoted to teaching reading in the literacy classrooms with which I have had contact.

I propose that teachers insert the *Language Experience Approach*, as described by Stauffer, into the beginning of every first grader's experience. Learning to take dictation takes skill but it is never dull. As computers become a working part of instruction, taking dictation and providing copies for each reader becomes easier and immediate. A purchase of chart paper and 3x5 cards is the only additional purchase necessary. If your students of any age are not learning to read with proficiency, it is never too late for dictated personal experiences.

Let us keep what is good about Whole Language and correct what is not accomplishing the mission. Protecting our turf is not a good reason to hurt children. Legislators have no knowledge sufficient to make sensible decisions about the teaching of reading.

Summary

1. When considering a change in method, it is incumbent upon us to experiment with a small number of children, over a long period of time, with experienced staff, supervisors, and researchers, who provide on-going evaluation. We must provide a successful back-up system for those students not succeeding.

2. Elements of a system, which must be unlearned, have proven problematic for young learners. These problematic elements include phonetic alphabets, nonsense syllables, diacritical markings, the rebus and Caleb Gattegno's (1957) *Words In Color*(as cited in Smith, 1965). *Words In Color* was an attempt to code each vowel, vowel digraph, consonant digraph and some consonant sounds to a specific color. It is best to avoid any system with artificial characteristics.
3. Avoid any proposal based upon a stimulus-response philosophy of learning.
4. An initial reading program based upon the students' own thoughts and words should begin with the "known".

As reading professionals, we stand on the shoulders of giants. Their contributions are as valid today as they ever were. Their insights assist in the decision-making processes we face daily as we dare to teach.

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THIS IS READING!

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Dr. Kress received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Secondary Education in June 1938 at Lock Haven State College, where he majored in Mathematics and Science. Following four and one half years of teaching in Special Education, he entered the United States Marine Corps where he served thirty-nine months during World War II. After some service with the Veterans Administration he earned a Master of Science degree in the Psychology of Reading and a Ph.D. from the Department of Psychology at Temple University.

He is a member of the Reading Hall of Fame and has received numerous awards for his work in reading from his Undergraduate University, the International Reading Association and the College Reading Association. He has served on the Board of Directors for both IRA and CRA.

To read and interpret a printed message involves the accurate decoding of visual symbols and understanding their basic meaning. This is a thinking process that has been defined as *the organization or reorganization of* (Kress, 1960) *experience to form new concepts, or to aid in the recall of previously learned ones.* This statement refutes Webster's definition of the related terms "think," "thinking," and "thought" as "mental concentration on ideas as distinguished from sense perceptions or emotions." It could be hypothesized that Webster wanted to emphasize the "mental" aspect of the thinking process, rather than sensory data, on which all thinking is based. However, in reality it is impossible to separate these two. His use of the word "ideas" would imply

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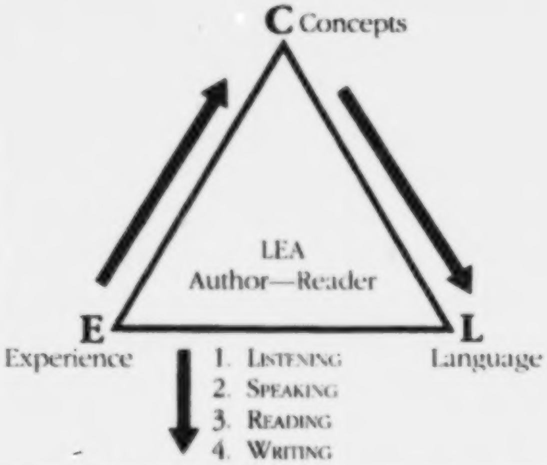
that he recognized this third component of the thinking process. Thus, there are three essential elements in the thinking process: 1) experience (sensory and emotional), 2) the neuro-psychological ability to structure this experience, and 3) concept formation. Since our topic deals with this process as the *basis of communication*, it is proper to add one more element, *language*. Without language, humans are unable to communicate very much of their thinking. Most of their thinking is done symbolically and involves the manipulation of verbal material. Although some thought may be of a non-verbal nature, schematically, the process of thinking and communicating can best be represented by use of the semantic triangle (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.



The order of the development of language abilities is from experience to the formation of concepts and ideas, to the use of language labels to represent these ideas. Thinking involves the manipulation of concepts and ideas through the use of the language symbols. However, *both* are based upon the basic sensory experiences from which the concepts and ideas were abstracted. Thus, there is no meaning in the symbols per se, but only in the experiences upon which they are based, i.e. in the language-fact relationships involved.

Experience

Individuals' contact with their environment is maintained primarily through the functioning of their basic sensory system. Stimuli received through the various senses provide them with a basic reservoir of data about this environment. The sum total of these data at any given time in life represents an individual's life experience. It is this experience which provides the reservoir from which man and woman develop their understanding about their world. Through additional stimuli comes modification of the basic body of data and a change in the understandings. Thus the dimensions of breadth and depth are added to basic concepts by increasing the size of the reader's reservoir of experience.

Two essential factors concerning the uniqueness of each individual, and each sensory experience, are important here in understanding personal perception and concept formation. Firstly, since no two individuals are precisely alike, the manner in which two or more persons receive exactly the same sensory stimuli will differ, even if ever so slightly, among the members of a highly homogeneous population. Thus, what is added to the existing reservoir will be different for each person. Add to this, the knowledge that no two individual's previous knowledge and experience will be the same. The resultant differences are further extended. Secondly, no two sensory experiences can be precisely the same. Thus similar sensory data received, by different individuals, *cannot* result in the *same* additive to the basic experience reservoir of each.

Organization of Stimuli

Exposure to one's environment is not in itself the sole ingredient needed to bring about the development of understandings. The stimuli received by the individual must be transformed from a mass of disorganized sensory experiences, into patterns of meaningful perceptual memories for storage in the central nervous system. The organization of stimuli through identification of basic similarities and differences, appears to be the most important aspect of concept formation. The ability of the individual to deal meaningfully with basic sensory data is dependent upon 1) his innate neurological integration-intelligence, 2) the richness of the stimuli, 3) his ability to attend to the stimuli at the time of reception-motivation, and 4) the richness of his previous reservoir of similar experience.

In Figure 1, this ability to organize sensory data is represented by the side **E-C** of the triangle. The reservoir of past experience, plus the additive to it in the form of the current stimuli, is expressed by the angle **E**. The individual's *ability* to attend to the stimuli, to abstract essential similarities and differences in terms of his past experience, and to move in the direction of attaching meaning to these stimuli, is further represented by the arrow pointing toward the top of the triangle.

Concept Formation

According to the literature contributed by the majority of the investigators in the area of concept formation, this process is primarily concerned with the following: 1) the perception of stimuli through sensory receptors,

2) the differentiation and discrimination of these percepts, 3) the formulation of a tentative hypothesis based upon this differentiation and upon the process of abstracting, 4) the setting up of some type of classification or categorization of the elements abstracted, and 5) the testing of this hypothesis against the further occurrence of similar stimuli. The entire process demands the utilization of previous experience, and reorganization in terms of the present situation or context.

In discussing the characteristics of ideas in the conscious state, Rappaport (1946) refers to the facet of ***identifiability*** as its "similarity to, dissimilarity from, or belonging with other ideas." For an idea to be ***identifiable*** it is not sufficient that it should have some meaningful connection to an idea which before has been in consciousness, but that this connection should also be clear. This facet of ***identifiability*** is usually referred to as concept formation.

Returning to Figure 1, the facet of identifiability or the ultimate attachment of meaning to stimuli is represented by the angle **C**. The process of concept formation is all that has preceded this encompassed in our discussion of *experience* and the *organization of stimuli* (**E-C**).

Rappaport (1946) further speaks of *content* and *realm* in describing the characteristics of concepts! The content of a concept is the sum totals of all the characteristics, which are common to all of the objects, ideas, or events. The realm includes all of the objects, ideas or events, which can be included in the concept by virtue of having its content in common. Thus, the realm of the concept "chair" is all the chairs, which exist or can be thought of, regardless of their color, shape, size, etc. The content of the concept "chair" is that elusive common characteristic of all chairs, which might be called "chairness". However, "chairness" exists nowhere; it is merely a verbal label, which implies a content characteristic of all chairs. Although the use of the word chair implies these content characteristics, individual differences in background experience and conceptual organization, are concealed.

Symbolization

Both Vinacke (1952) and Rappaport (1946) conclude in their discussion of concept formation that the process results in a symbolic response (not necessarily linguistic) by the organism. This symbolization, whether of the verbal character, which we call language or of a non-verbal nature as described by Ruesch and Kees (1956), facilitates the manipulation of concepts by the individual. This manipulation may be intrinsic (inner thought) or extrinsic, for purposes of communication with others. In either case, the culminating act in concept formation is the association of the concept with some symbolic representation of the concept. Thinking is facilitated when concepts can be manipulated rapidly and efficiently via this symbolic medium.

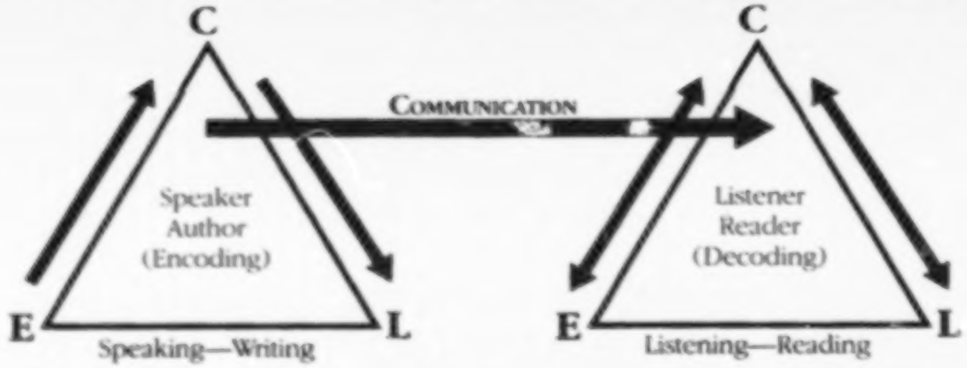
Returning to Figure 1, this association of a concept with a symbol is represented by the angle **L**. In the orthogenetic sense, it follows the direction of the second arrow from **C** to **L**. Closure is effected, in the triangle by the base line **E-L**. **E-L** represents the language-fact relationships, which exist between the symbol and the basic sensory data from which it is derived. However, in reality, the pathway is always **E** to **C** or **C** to **L**, never directly **L** to **E**. Thus, concepts are the raw materials for thought, not symbols, nor the basic sensory experiences. It is the basic organization of the sensory data, which culminates in the formation of concepts. The symbolic resultant merely provides the medium by which these concepts can be manipulated more efficiently by the individual. In fact, according to the semanticists, it is this ability to symbolize, highly developed in humans, which differentiates them from all other animal life. Refined to its highest degree (orthography) it has made individuals "time-binders", capable of communication with other members of their species, both past and future. All other animal life found capable of communication can do so only in the present.

Communication—Comprehension

An individual's ability to communicate develops as soon as exposure to life occurs. This is when conceptualization and symbolization begin to take place. The speed with which this occurs, and further matures, is primarily dependent upon an intact sensory system. Humans are able to generalize from repeated sensory contact with their world. Understanding of the symbolic manipulation of concepts matures first as a listening skill in which communication is purely a one way street, speaker to listener. Later, as the listener's language abilities develop further, a second lane is laid down and the process can go both ways-speaking and listening. However, the exactness with which one individual understands another is always dependent upon the degree of similarity found in their reservoir of life experience, in the content of their concepts, and in their agreement upon the symbols used to represent these concepts. They must be in agreement about the language-fact relationships involved in the realm and content of the concepts employed in their attempt to communicate.

In Figure 2, the semantic triangles illustrate the problems of communication. The listener understands the speaker when there is a relative degree of similarity in: 1) their experience background, 2) their ability to organize this experience and form concepts 3) their agreement about the realm and content of the concepts employed, and 4) their use of the same language labels to stand for these concepts. Of course the entire process is also influenced by either participant's ability to attend to and concentrate upon this experience of speaking or listening. In face-to-face conversation, the speaker may be able

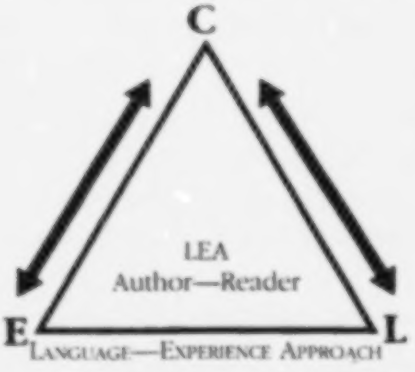
Figure 2.


C
C
COMMUNICATION
Speaker
Author
(Encoding)
Listener
Reader
(Decoding)
E
L
E
L
Speaking—Writing
Listening—Reading

to modify his communication and enhance understanding as a result of non-verbal communication in the reverse direction, i.e. posture, facial expression, gesture, and attitude. In radio, television, recordings and the like, such modifications are not likely since the speaker cannot see his listener. Similarly, communication through the medium of systems of writing, orthography, may be represented using the same schema by substituting for "Speaker" *Author*, and for "Listener" -*Reader*, in the triangles. However, as in recordings and films, time may become an important barrier to the similarity of experience, concepts and symbolization, i.e. *The Old Testament*, *Rosetta Stone*.

The process of reading may be defined as *thinking stimulated by written symbols*. However, the ability to think when stimulated, involves the same processes indicated in the foregoing discussion: experience, organization, concept formation, and symbolization. For elementary school children, the refinement of thinking abilities in reading situations is preceded by mastery of the same basic skills when listening to language and when using it orally.

Figure 3.


C
LEA
Author—Reader
E
L
LANGUAGE—EXPERIENCE APPROACH

Language Experience Approach

The preceding discussion should clearly indicate the advantage of the Language Experience Approach, especially in beginning reading (Stauffer, 1980).

In this approach the child is both the author and the reader, eliminating the usual barriers to communication. The dictated story for reading comes from the child's experience, concepts and language. The only barrier possible is the time frame, usually, at most, no more than twenty-four hours.

Summary

The comprehension basis of thought and communication could be said to lie in the richness of the life experience of the individual, in the ability to differentiate and categorize this experience to form concepts, and in the skills using commonly understood symbols for the purpose of manipulating these concepts. Agreement among men and women about the realm and content of their concepts will enhance their ability to communicate more precisely with each other and understand, even when they do not agree.

The major role of the educator seems to lie in the acceptance of the responsibility for bringing each individual up to the full realization of their potential, and for being able to communicate with their world. That world is made up of more than those who live around the individual. It encompasses all who ever lived and recorded a message for anyone of any age to interpret and understand. Experience-concepts-language: this is the eternal triangle that differentiates humans from all other forms of life.

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RESEARCH AWARDS

AN EXPLORATION OF READING ATTITUDES AND LITERARY CHARACTER IDENTIFICATION IN THIRD GRADERS

Dissertation Award

Barbara S. Abromitis

Lewis University

Abstract

This study explored reading attitudes, the ability to identify with story characters, and the relationship between these variables in 75 third grade students. Girls had more positive reading attitudes than boys, and recorded more books in their booklogs. Differences in reading behaviors existed among the four school groups, but no differences were found for gender or school groups in the ability to identify with a character. No relationship was found between reading attitude and character identification. Students with positive reading attitude enjoyed varied reading, and frequently participated in interactive reading activities. Students with neutral reading attitude read regularly but did not usually participate in interactive reading activities. Students with negative reading attitude did not often choose to read and were undecided about their feelings when reading. Greater differences in reading behavior existed among the schools than among the reading attitude groups, possibly due to the teachers and school environments.

The problem of *aliteracy* has been defined as a "lack of the reading habit . . . in capable readers who choose not to read" (Harris & Hodges, 1981, p.11). In the classroom, children read to master new material, explore new stories, fit in with their peer groups, and comply with the teacher's directions (Wigfield, 1997). For some children, these external purposes become internalized, and reading becomes a pleasurable choice; for others, however, reading remains an academic exercise.

Aliteracy negatively affects a child's ability to learn (Beers, 1996). Educators now face a majority of students who choose not to read and thus miss much of the background information they need to comprehend advanced texts as they move through the upper grades (Gillett and Temple, 1994). In addition, Woiwode (1992) estimates that of adults who have left school, nearly 60% do not read anything at all, while most of the rest read only one book per year.

The construct of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation provides insight into aliteracy. Intrinsic motivation refers to wanting to do something simply for the sake of doing it, and extrinsic motivation refers to wanting to do something because of a reward or other external stimulus connected with the activity (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Harter, 1981). Intrinsic motivation includes the concept of continuing motivation, or choosing to do an activity outside the context of learning it (Maehr, 1976). A lack of continuing intrinsic motivation for reading appears to be a characteristic of aliterate students (Beers, 1996), while aesthetic readers, or those who are able to "lose themselves" in text, appear to have higher levels of intrinsic motivation for reading (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Many, 1992; Oldfather, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1978).

The ability to identify with story characters may also positively influence a child's developing attitude toward reading. As characters cope with human problems and situations, readers learn something about their own humanity (Applebee, 1978; Bettelheim, 1976; Lehr, 1991; Peterson & Eeds, 1990). As story characters become friends, they may also inspire reluctant readers to persevere and avid readers to reach new heights of understanding (Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 1996; Winograd & Smith, 1987).

This study explores third graders' reading attitudes; the literacy habits that students with positive, neutral, or negative reading attitudes possess; and the ability of third graders to identify with a story character. Further, the study examines whether a relationship exists between the ability of third graders to identify with a story character and their existing reading attitudes. If a relationship exists, an instructional strategy that specifically helps students connect character experiences to their lives may be useful in combating aliteracy.

Primary Research Questions

1. What are the reading attitudes of third graders from four different communities in the Chicago suburban area as measured by the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990), the Reader Self-Perception Scale (Henk & Melnick, 1995), the Motivations for Reading Questionnaire (Wigfield, Guthrie, & McGough, 1996), the Measuring Reading Activity Inventory (Guthrie, McGough, & Wigfield, 1994), a Conversational Interview (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1995), and a Booklog (Valencia & Place, 1994)?
2. To what extent do third graders identify with a character from a short story as measured by a read-aloud story experience and interview?
3. Is there a relationship between the third graders' reading attitudes and their ability to identify with a story character?

4. To what extent are third graders with positive, neutral, and negative reading attitudes motivated to read and engage in reading-related activities at home and at school?

Secondary Research Questions

5. Are there differences between the reading attitudes of third-grade boys and girls and among the reading attitude scores at each school?
6. What experiences at home and at school are most prevalent in third graders with positive, neutral, and negative reading attitudes?

Review of the Literature

The use of quality children's literature during instruction introduces children to outside experiences, while involvement with a story character expands a child's understanding of human emotions (Lamme, Krogh, & Yachmetz., 1992). The ability to make inferences about a story character's thoughts, motivations, and feelings facilitates comprehension and the employment of an aesthetic stance while reading (Carnine, Stevens, Clements, & Kameenui, 1982; Many, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1978; Tannenbaum & Gaer, 1965). It may also contribute to the development of a positive attitude about reading (Lehr, 1990; Spiegel, 1981).

Attitudes are caused by personal values, goals, and self-concepts, which result from a person's beliefs about a situation (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Reading attitudes are related to the experiences students have had while learning to read (Saracho & Dayton, 1989). However, even positive reading attitudes may deteriorate as students move through the upper grades and into high school (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Cloer & Pearman, 1992; Ross & Fletcher, 1989; Tunnell, Calder, Justen & Phaup, 1991; White, 1989). Girls generally have a more positive reading attitude than boys (Cloer & Pearman, 1992; Dwyer & Reed, 1989; Ross & Fletcher, 1989; Schooley, 1994; Smith, 1990; White, 1989), and not surprisingly, high-achieving students have more positive attitudes than do low-achieving students (Rasinski, 1988).

Reading attitude is also influenced by students' perceptions of each other as readers (Schell, 1992), their sense of self-efficacy regarding reading (Scott, 1996), and the reading habits of their families (Goodwin, 1996; Shepston & Jensen, 1996). While the ability to identify with story characters may also influence students' attitudes about reading, this ability appears to be developmental and related to children's ability to perceive other people (Lukens, 1995). As children mature, they learn to organize their perceptions and inferences about another's behaviors (Emery, 1992; Gollin, 1958; Scarlett, Press, & Crockett, 1971), and these perceptions of others are closely related to the personality of the observer (Yarrow & Campbell, 1963).

As readers identify with a character, they put themselves in the place of the character and experience what the character feels (Kingston & White, 1967). The more similar readers are to a character, the easier it is for readers to imagine themselves in the character's place (Jose & Brewer, 1984; Tannenbaum & Gaer, 1965). As readers identify with characters, their own personalities and self-concepts influence the interpretations as well (Beach & Wendler, 1987; Kingston & White, 1967; Rosenblatt, 1978). In summary, the reading experience, including the ability to identify with characters and grow from vicarious experiences, is affected by instruction, reading ability, knowledge about reading content, the text itself, and the reader's own personality (Beach & Wendler, 1987; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Gillespie, 1993; Johnson & Gaskins, 1992; Kingston & White, 1967; Nell, 1988).

Methodology

Participants

The study was conducted with third graders, because it is at this level that positive reading attitudes often begin to deteriorate (Anderson et al., 1988; Cloer & Pearman, 1992; Ross & Fletcher, 1989; Tunnell et al., 1991; White, 1989). Four schools (pseudonyms) in the Chicago suburban area were chosen for the study: Randolph School in the far south suburbs, Bradley School in the west suburbs, Lawrence School in the northwest suburbs, and Oliver School in the southwest suburbs. The communities that were chosen for the study represented diversity in educational levels, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity.

Forty-one girls and thirty-four boys participated in the study. Student ages ranged from 8 years, 7 months to 9 years, 6 months. The mean age for boys was 9 years, 1 month; the mean age for girls was 8 years, 9 months; and the mean age for the full sample was 8 years, 11 months.

Measuring Reading Attitude

General reading attitude was measured using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) (McKenna & Kear, 1990), a survey that reflects both recreational and academic reading attitudes. The Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS) examined the students' concepts about themselves as readers (Henk & Melnick, 1995). The Motivations for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ) (Wigfield et al., 1996) categorized students' motivation for reading or reading avoidance. The Measuring Reading Activity: An Inventory (MRA) (Guthrie et al., 1994) corroborated with specific examples the attitudes conveyed in the ERAS, RSPS, and MRQ.

Raw scores were used for all statistical computations and to determine whether a relationship existed between reading attitude and the ability to identify with story character. Because the data were ordinal, the Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), post hoc Mann Whitney U tests, and the Spearman rank-order correlation were used for analyses. An item analysis of these measures was used to develop the composite profiles of students with positive, neutral, and negative reading attitudes.

Conversational interviews (Gambrell et al., 1995) allowed students to describe their favorite reading choices and experiences that motivate them to read. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for analysis. Reading habits were also measured through the collection of two-week booklogs (Valencia and Place, 1994) that included whether the book was read at home or school. Parent and teacher surveys were developed to learn about the students' observed reading behaviors at home and school.

Measuring Character Identification

Character identification was measured through an individual interview. Students listened to the short story *Every Living Thing* by Cynthia Rylant (1985), and then responded to a series of prompts that focused on the main character and his or her similarity to the student. Separate girls' and boys' versions were used with student participants.

Responses to the story were audiotaped, transcribed, and coded into T-units, or semantically independent clauses (Froese, 1990; Gunderson, 1988; Wang & Cameron, 1996). Coded responses were evaluated and placed on a rubric scale of 0-3: 0 for no response; 1 for partial or inaccurate responses or questions of clarification; 2 for literal responses (those that focused solely on the recall of story elements); and 3 for integrated responses (those that inferred motives or feelings of the character or those that integrated the student's life experiences with the story elements).

The analysis of character identification responses also included an overall placement of students into the following categories: (1) Without Focus, (2) Primarily Efferent, or (3) Primarily Aesthetic, based upon the number of responses in each category (Many, 1992).

The overall rating provided a numeric rank score that was correlated with the reading attitude scores from the ERAS, RSPS, MRQ, and MRA using the Spearman rank-order correlation, to determine whether a relationship existed between the areas of study.

Students were divided into groups based on their General Reading Attitude percentile scores on the ERAS. Students with scores of 0-33 were said to have negative reading attitudes; students with scores of 34-66 were said to have neutral reading attitudes; and students with scores of 67-99 were said to have positive reading attitudes. An item analysis of the ERAS, RSPS, MRQ, MRA, interviews, surveys, and booklogs was conducted to determine specific motivations and interests for each reading attitude group. Trends or patterns were discerned from the data, and from these patterns, composite profiles for students with positive, neutral, or negative reading attitudes were developed and organized according to Mathewson's (1994) model for intention to read: attitude (including feelings about reading, action readiness to read, and evaluative beliefs about reading), external motivators, and internal emotional state.

Results

Reading Attitudes

On the ERAS, girls had significantly more positive reading attitudes than boys, though no significant differences were found among the schools. On the RSPS, no significant differences were found between boys and girls or among the four schools. On the MRQ, no significant differences were found between gender or school groups. On the MRA, no significant differences in reading activity were found between boys and girls. However, significant differences in reading activity were found among the four schools.

No significant differences were found between gender groups or among school groups for discussion of recent reading, ability to name people or things that excited them about reading, and ability to name a favorite author. For whether or not students carried books with them, no significant differences were found for gender, but significant differences were found among the school groups.

Participating students kept a two-week booklog of their independent reading. Girls read significantly more books than boys, and significant differences in recorded reading existed among the four schools.

Character Identification

On the character identification interview, no significant differences were found between boys and girls or among school groups.

A qualitative analysis of the Primarily Aesthetic interview responses indicated five categories of identification across all three reading attitude groups: 1) students found similarities between themselves and the depiction of the character as a struggling student; 2) they focused on the character's difficulty making friends; 3) students identified with the character's feelings about his pet turtle; 4) they inferred and identified with the character's feelings or motives based upon their own experiences; or 5) students ignored the character's feelings and identified with external characteristics.

Relationship Between Reading Attitude and Character Identification

Raw total scores from the ERAS, RSPS, MRQ, and MRA were correlated with the character identification rating to determine whether a relationship existed between the two areas of study. No relationship between any of the reading attitude measures and character identification ratings was found for the full sample, gender groups, or school groups.

Reading Attitude Group Descriptions and Behaviors

Twenty-nine students (19 girls and 10 boys) were identified as having positive reading attitudes. Teachers reported that most of these students read for pleasure, check out books from the library, choose to read during free time, and read for information. Fewer students relate ideas from previous reading, choose to write stories, recommend books to others, or share books with the class.

Parents of 19 positive reading attitude students responded to the surveys about home reading behaviors. Of these, over half the students talk about reading, read aloud to family members, enjoy receiving books as gifts, choose to read during free time, enjoy visiting the library, share books with family members, read for information, and choose to write stories. Less than half of the positive reading attitude students recommend books to others or have a favorite author.

Twenty-eight students (11 girls and 17 boys) were identified as having neutral attitudes toward reading. Teachers observed that most of these students check out books from the library, read for pleasure, and read for information. Less than half of the neutral reading attitude students relate ideas from previous reading, choose to write stories, share books with others, choose to read during free time, or recommend books to others.

Twenty-three parents responded to surveys about home reading behaviors. Of these, over half the neutral reading attitude students enjoy visiting the library, talk about reading, choose to read during free time, enjoy receiving books as gifts, read for information, and read aloud to family members. Less than half the neutral reading attitude students share books with family members, have a favorite author, recommend books to others, and choose to write stories.

Eighteen students (10 girls and 8 boys) were identified as having negative reading attitudes. Teachers observed that all of these students check out books from the library and that over half of them for pleasure and information. Less than half of the negative reading attitude students choose to read during free time, share books with others, relate ideas from previous reading, choose to write stories, or recommend books to others.

Thirteen parents responded to the surveys. They reported that half of the negative reading attitude students enjoyed visiting the library, reading aloud to family members, talking about reading, and reading for information. Less than half of them share books with family members, enjoy books as gifts, choose to read during free time, recommend books to others, choose to write stories, or have a favorite author.

Reading Attitudes—Feelings About Reading

Positive reading attitude students had strong feelings of enjoyment when reading for recreation or learning. Reading work avoidance was not an issue for most of the positive reading attitude students, although many of the students agreed that they did not like stories with too many characters in them. Girls liked reading aloud more than boys did. Surprisingly, at Randolph School, a strong tendency to avoid reading was reported by a majority of the positive reading attitude students. On the booklogs, positive reading attitude students read most of the recorded titles at home.

Neutral reading attitude students tended to enjoy recreational reading more than academic reading, though Randolph School students reported a slight overall preference for academic reading. Many strongly avoided certain types of reading work, such as text with difficult words or complicated plots, and their booklogs indicated that more of their reading was done at school than at home. Neutral reading attitude students often reported reading books on their own that the teacher had first read aloud to their class.

Negative reading attitude students preferred recreational reading to academic reading but did not choose to read during their free time. They had slightly less favorable impressions of themselves than did the other groups, and many were undecided about the enjoyment they felt when reading. Most negative reading attitude students strongly avoided difficult reading situations. They had fewer titles listed on their booklogs, and in general, they reported less variety and complexity of reading material.

Reading Attitudes—Action Readiness

Most positive reading attitude students felt they were making strong progress as readers and were very motivated to read when presented with interesting topics. Most positive reading attitude students owned over 50 books, and over half had numerous types of reading materials available to them at home. Most named a favorite author and were able to discuss several strategies for choosing books.

Neutral reading attitude students also felt they were making progress as readers, though most Lawrence School students reported progress primarily in the areas of word recognition and decoding. Most neutral reading attitude students liked reading about new things, though those who read for enjoyment most often only remembered reading directions for an activity. Most neutral reading attitude students owned over 50 books. Many were able to name a favorite author, and over half had a variety of reading materials available at home.

Negative reading attitude students also felt they were making progress as readers, though most were inconsistent in their recall of academic reading experiences, and often only remembered reading directions for an activity in their own time. Reading patterns varied by school, but overall, most negative reading attitude students reported little reading activity and few recalled titles. Most negative reading attitude students owned 10-50 books. Some could name a favorite author, and approximately half indicated a variety of reading materials in their homes.

Reading Attitudes—Evaluative Beliefs

Positive reading attitude students strongly agreed that reading is important. Parents of these students often described themselves as avid readers who view reading as an escape from their everyday lives.Most neutral reading attitude students also agreed that reading is important. Parents of neutral reading attitude students described themselves as avid readers, but many mentioned a lack of time as an obstacle to their reading. Negative reading attitude students tended to agree that reading is important, but were divided if the statement compared reading to other activities. Many parents of negative reading attitude students said they lacked time for reading, while others described themselves as nonreaders.

External Motivators

Most positive reading attitude students were motivated by teacher and family expectations, recognition, grades, competition, and social feedback. Girls were more likely to discuss reading with their friends than boys were. Most positive reading attitude students named parents, siblings, extended family members, teachers, and friends as those who excited them about reading.

Neutral reading attitude students were motivated to read by teacher and family expectations, recognition, and grades. Statements about social feedback and competition brought a wide variety of responses, with boys more likely to disagree with statements about their friends and reading than girls. Neutral reading attitude students most often named parents, siblings, or family members as the people who interested them in reading.

Negative reading attitude students were also motivated by compliance, although their responses were more varied than those of the other two groups. Most were strongly motivated by teacher recognition, but less so from their friends, grades, and competition. Responses to the social feedback statements were mixed, with more disagreement for statements about friends and reading.

Negative reading attitude students had difficulty naming a person who excited them about reading. Some named their parents or teacher, others gave general statements such as "Everybody," and many claimed that nobody tried to interest them in reading.

Internal Emotional State

Positive reading attitude students felt confident when they compared their reading to that of their peers. Most also enjoyed the challenge of reading difficult text when it was for a project or hobby that interested them. Positive reading attitude students were able to name specific things about reading that excited them, such as plot, characters, and illustrations. Most were able to discuss strategies they used when picking out books to read.

Neutral reading attitude students tended to positively compare their reading with that of their peers, though they often disagreed with statements about reading faster or better than their classmates. Many neutral reading attitude students enjoyed the challenge of reading, could discuss what excited them about reading, and were able to name strategies they used to select reading material. Several mentioned external motivators they devised for themselves, such as contests with friends to see who could read a book faster. Others discussed programs such as Read to Succeed and Accelerated Reader as external motivations for reading.

Negative reading attitude students tended to feel that they read faster than other children, but they often disagreed with statements about vocabulary or decoding, and about reading more than other students do. Boys tended to view themselves more positively than girls did, and individual school groups had mixed responses to comparative statements.

Negative reading attitude students were undecided about the challenge of reading, with girls being slightly less willing to try difficult material. Negative reading attitude students were able to name some things that excited them about reading, although their responses were less specific than those of the other groups. While they often named TV characters whose books they looked for regularly, they were generally unable to name other strategies they used to pick out books or other reading material.

Discussion

In this study, girls had significantly more positive reading attitudes and more books read in a two-week period than boys, a finding that supports the results of several previous studies (Cloer & Pearman, 1992; Dwyer & Reed, 1989; Schooley, 1994; Smith, 1990; White, 1989). On measures of reader self-perception, motivations for reading, and actual reading behaviors as measured by the MRA, however, no significant differences for gender were found. One implication of this finding is that reading attitudes are complex and should be measured in a variety of ways in order to get a true understanding of a child's affect toward reading.

Because reading attitudes manifest themselves in reading-related behaviors, the MRA and qualitative evidence of reading activity are especially revealing. The significant differences found among the school groups support previous research that relates reading attitudes and behaviors to various types of reading experiences and instruction (Gillespie, 1993; Johnson & Gaskins, 1992).

The categories of aesthetic responses that occurred across reading attitude groups, genders, and individual schools in this study support Lehr's (1991) and Rosenblatt's (1978) theories that aesthetic reading experiences are personal and connected to the preconceptions the reader may have about the character.

No relationship existed between the students' attitudes about reading and their ability to identify with the story character. In other words, avid readers were no more likely to identify with this particular story character than were neutral or nonreaders. The theories of aesthetic reading (Many, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1978) suggest that avid readers choose to read because they are rewarded by their aesthetic involvement with text. Consequently, this finding was unexpected and contradicts one of the hypotheses of this study. However, if there is no relationship between children's attitude about reading and their ability to identify with a story character, then it is possible for all readers to achieve an aesthetic response to some character. For nonreaders, an aesthetic response to one character may inspire them to read again.

Important differences exist between and within reading attitude groups, and these differences are supported by and contribute to existing theories. First, while most parents reported activities in the home that were closely tied to Kubis's (1994) variables for developing positive reading attitudes, the student response to these activities was mixed: positive reading attitude students participated in most activities, neutral reading attitude students were more conditional in their response, and parents of negative reading attitude students struggled to involve their children with books. Though most parents initially provide literacy opportunities, positive responses may reinforce and lead to increased opportunities, while negative responses may erode parent confidence and decrease opportunities for reading at home.

Positive reading attitude students had parents who were avid readers and who spoke of reading as a pleasurable activity for which they tried to make time. Neutral reading attitude students had parents who described themselves as avid readers, but most reported little time for reading. Parents of negative reading attitude students often described themselves as nonreaders except for the newspaper or work-related reading. These results support Goodwin's (1996) findings that aliterate students often have parents who limit their own reading to newspapers or work-related text.

The most intriguing data from this study revealed greater differences between the individual schools than between the reading attitude groups themselves. The greatest contrast was between students at Oliver and

Randolph Schools. Most Randolph School students claimed to have positive reading attitudes, yet other evidence suggested that they did very little actual reading. The positive reading attitude students at Randolph strongly agreed with the statements about reading work avoidance. They did the majority of their reading at school and yet were very inconsistent in their responses to frequency of reading and remembered titles. The average number of books read was significantly lower for Randolph students than for the other schools.

At Oliver School, the class reading attitudes were fairly evenly distributed among the three reading attitude groups. Yet even the negative reading attitude students from Oliver reported more feelings of enjoyment when reading than students from the other schools. Oliver students consistently chose to read to learn new things, and they showed more frequency of reading and remembered titles than other students. They were most likely to report positive feedback from family, teacher, and peers. Finally, even the negative reading attitude students from Oliver School responded favorably to the challenge of reading difficult material.

Research suggests that interactive reading instruction, purposes for reading that are a part of daily living, and teacher modeling of reading behaviors all contribute to positive attitudes toward reading (DiSibio & Savitz, 1982; Tunnell & Jacobs, 1989; VanDongen, 1979). Many of the practical implications of this study stem from the strong literacy environment at Oliver School.

First, since girls tend to have more positive reading attitudes than boys, teachers may need to recruit community and school role models for boys to talk about their reading and why they find it valuable. Promoting a sense of reading community within the classroom will also help students feel more comfortable discussing their reading, recommending books to each other, and trading books among themselves.

Teachers and parents may find that increased communication about home literacy may encourage students to become more involved in reading and other literacy activities in the home. A reading club for parents, sponsored by the school community, may also turn some aliterate adults into enthusiastic readers.

Almost all the students in the study disliked oral reading to some degree. "Round robin" reading or "popcorn" reading has been a source of embarrassment and boredom for students for years. Alternative practices that focus on oral reading as performance not as a means of covering textbook material quickly should prove more valuable and enjoyable for students.

The final and most important implication of this study is for principals and individual teachers to examine the literacy environment of their schools and classrooms carefully. Teachers may challenge themselves to make the fostering of positive attitudes about reading a high priority in their reading instruction, while principals may move away from purely extrinsically motivating programs such as Accelerated Reader or Read to Succeed and make their schools into literate communities of learners through lunchtime book discussions, daily silent reading time for everyone in the building, guest readers from throughout the school district and community, visiting authors, and special rewards for children who promote reading in their classrooms.

Suggestions for Further Research

Several avenues of research would enhance and extend the results of this study. Because boys typically feel less positive about reading than girls do, further examination of boys' reading attitudes over time might provide insight into why and how they deteriorate. The development and study of a treatment that focused on developing boys as readers would also be very beneficial to educators.

Because many significant differences in reading activity existed among the school groups, careful documentation of classrooms where students enthusiastically participate in reading activities would serve to inform teachers about the best practices for fostering a love of reading.

Studies of character identification have proven inconclusive due to the difficulty of measuring such a private and subjective event. Because identification with a story character is dependent on the reader's experiences and the author's style, future studies could focus on more than one character, reading and character identification over a longer period of time, differences in character identification after oral and silent reading, and/or the personal recording of reader impressions through reader response journals.

In conclusion, aliteracy will most likely become an increasingly important issue in education. Nonreaders are at a distinct disadvantage in school and in life because they are not building the store of background knowledge that readers are. Creative approaches to fostering positive attitudes toward reading must be developed and used at all ages, because reading programs that rely on extrinsic motivation do not appear to produce the types of aesthetic responses that lead to positive attitudes about reading. Successful literacy learning will occur only when every child can and chooses to read.

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"EVERYBODY SHOULD DO LITERATURE CLUBS": STUDENTS REVEAL THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THE EXPERIENCE

Honorable Mention
Doctoral Research Award

Denise H. Stuart

Cleveland State University

Abstract

Although research has documented peer-led discussion as response to literature, benefits and factors that affect discussion, little has been reported on perceptions of this collaborative process through the voices of students as they engage in and reflect on peer-led discussion. This study offers the ideas of three urban fifth-grade students' participation in peer-led discussion of literature over an eight-month period. Students offered perceptions about their experiences with peer-led discussion and their ideas on factors that influence the discussions particularly what worked, what did not work and ways to strengthen discussion. Findings support that students can reveal their metacognitive understanding of group discussions in a variety of meaningful ways.

Introduction

In many classrooms today students are encouraged to construct collaborative and personal meaning of text read and as a component of their literacy programs teachers are using discussion as a means to this constructive process (Raphael & McMahon, 1994). Students can be seen gathered in circles around tables, with novels and other print material in hand, purposefully talking among themselves. Teachers rotate around the room stopping to join in parts of the conversations, discussions of literature. Increasingly this discussion is peer-led with students taking a variety of roles in this process and teacher functioning as facilitator (Almasi, 1996). Although the research has documented peer-led discussion as response to literature (Leal, 1993) and benefits and factors that affect discussion (Alvermann, 1986; O'Flahavan, 1989) little has been reported on students' perceptions of this collaborative process. Importantly, while students are at the center of the process, little has been reported through their voices as they engage in and reflect on peer-led discussion.

Peer-led discussion is rooted in views of reading as a social process (Bloome, 1985) and as a transaction between the text, the reader, including background experiences and knowledge, and the context of the reading situation (Rosenblatt, 1978). These interactive discussions encouraged what Barnes (1992) described as "exploratory talk" that emphasizes student engagement and thinking at multiple levels. Barnes (1992) discussed the process and dynamics of cognitive strategies through exploratory talk, problem solving, and exposure to points of view to further idea development.

Much research has been done on the benefits of peer-led discussions, in particular discussions of literature (McCormack, 1993; Samway et. al., 1991; Wollman-Bonilla, 1994). These discussions are social environments where students have the opportunity to observe higher levels of cognitive processing, actively participate in the scaffolding of the interaction and as they work through what Vygotsky (1992) describes as "zones of proximal development," achieving more than they would independently. Students develop ability to confirm, extend, or modify their individual interpretations of text as they engage in peer-led discussion (Eeds & Wells, 1989). Questioning, rethinking, and refining understanding occur through discussion of literature (Langer, 1992). Literate thinkers emerge as empowered learners (Wells & Chang-Wells, 1996).

As students interact in peer-led discussions they learn how to negotiate meaning of the text and control their own learning (O'Flahavan, 1989). As they encounter additional viewpoints and feelings, positive attitudes towards others are fostered and self-esteem is increased (Slavin, 1990). Students take on a variety of fluid roles that encourage social and communicative competence rather than what Cazden (1986) describes as traditional (I-R-E: Initiate, Respond and Evaluate) discussion where roles of teachers and students are static. Not only are students in the role of respondents but they also become inquisitors, facilitators, and evaluators as they interact with each other and text exploring and constructing personal and collaborative meaning (Almasi, 1996). Teachers become facilitators of the literacy event as they scaffold the interactive discussion (Almasi, 1996).

Purpose of the Study

While many aspects of peer-led discussions have been researched as described above there is a need for educators to further understand how and why students interact in peer-led discussion from the students' perspective in order to more effectively implement this approach to literacy development. There is a need to hear the voices of the students themselves. This paper will present one aspect of a larger study that will address the research question: How do students describe peer-led discussions? Categories emerging from this aspect of the larger study include students' ideas on factors that influenced discussion, more specifically what they thought worked, what didn't and further suggestions for improvement of discussion sessions in the literature clubs of this fifth grade urban gifted and talented program. The richness of description and the voices of the students in this study add to the growing body of knowledge on peer-led discussion.

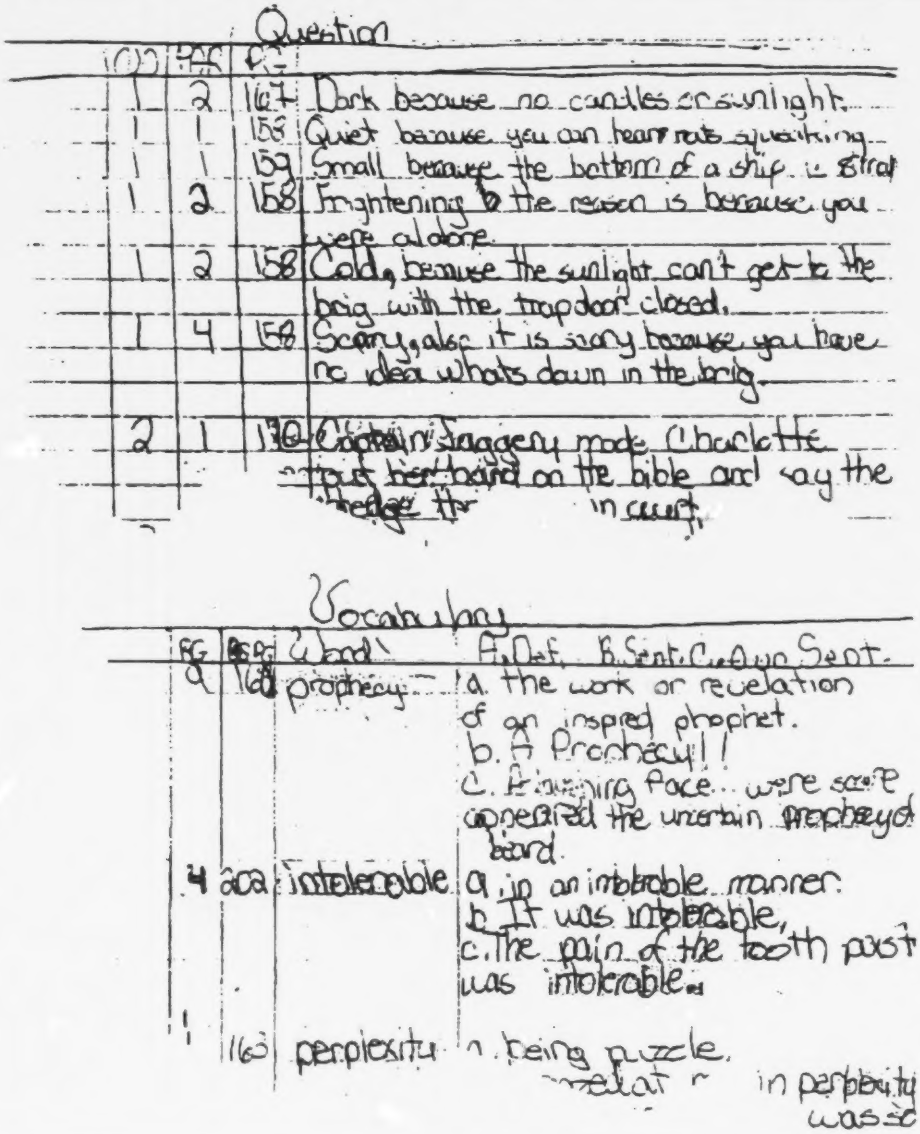
Methods of the Study

The context for this study was an urban fifth grade class in a gifted and talented program. Students engaged in peer-led discussion as part of literature clubs. Small groups of students met once a week for five weeks to discuss a common novel read. Each group read a different novel and the study spanned the reading of two novels for each of three different groups. Group membership remained constant throughout the study. Students developed written responses to their reading as part of preparation for discussion sessions. Conditions of this study, the ways that students prepared writing and brought ideas to the discussions varied and evolved as described below.

Over the course of this study several instructional shifts occurred that affected both the ways students prepared for and participated in discussion of literature. Initially students engaged in literature club in traditional program ways, reading assigned pages and responding to teacher-assigned questions and vocabulary to be discussed in group (figure 1). Students then self-selected ideas to be shared and vocabulary to be explored; they recorded these on note cards (figure 2) and Post-it™ (figure 3) rather than in structured notebooks. And they began to reflect on their discussion sessions as a group, charting ideas about what they could do or say to have a good discussion (figure 4) similar to Wiencek's (1996) Conversational Discussion Group framework.

Data were collected for this classroom-based, naturalistic inquiry from semi-structured interviews with students, audiotapes and videotapes of group discussions, classroom observations, and documents created by students over an eight month period, through cycles of reading two novels. Data collection, reduction and analysis were simultaneous and recursive processes in this qualitative case study research. Analytic induction of combing for cat-

Figure 1. Notebook Page of Teacher Assigned Questions Prepared for Peer-Led Discussion



Question

(Q)	[illegible]	PG	
1	2	167	Dark because no candles or sunlight.
1	1	158	Quiet because you can hear rats squeaking.
1	1	159	Small because the bottom of a ship is [illegible]
1	2	158	Frightening the reason is because you were alone.
1	2	158	Cold, because the sunlight can't get to the brig with the trapdoor closed.
1	4	158	Scary, also it is scary because you have no idea whats down in the brig.
2	1	170	Captain Jaggery made Charlotte put her hand on the bible and say the pledge the [illegible] in court.

Vocabulary

PG	[illegible]	Word	A. Def. B. Sent. C. Own Sent.
9	160	prophecy	a. the work or revelation of an inspired prophet. b. A Prophecy!! c. [illegible] face... were scare appeared the uncertain prophecy [illegible] board.
4	202	intolerable	a. in an intolerable manner. b. It was intolerable, c. The pain of the tooth past was intolerable.
1	163	perplexity	a. being puzzle. [illegible] in perplexity was [illegible]

egories and domains was the primary strategy for data analysis (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) and constant comparative methods were employed in developing tentative properties and hypotheses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A multi-method of triangulation was used to insure the validity and reliability of emerging findings (Denzin, 1978) as well as inter-rater reliability during the final stages.

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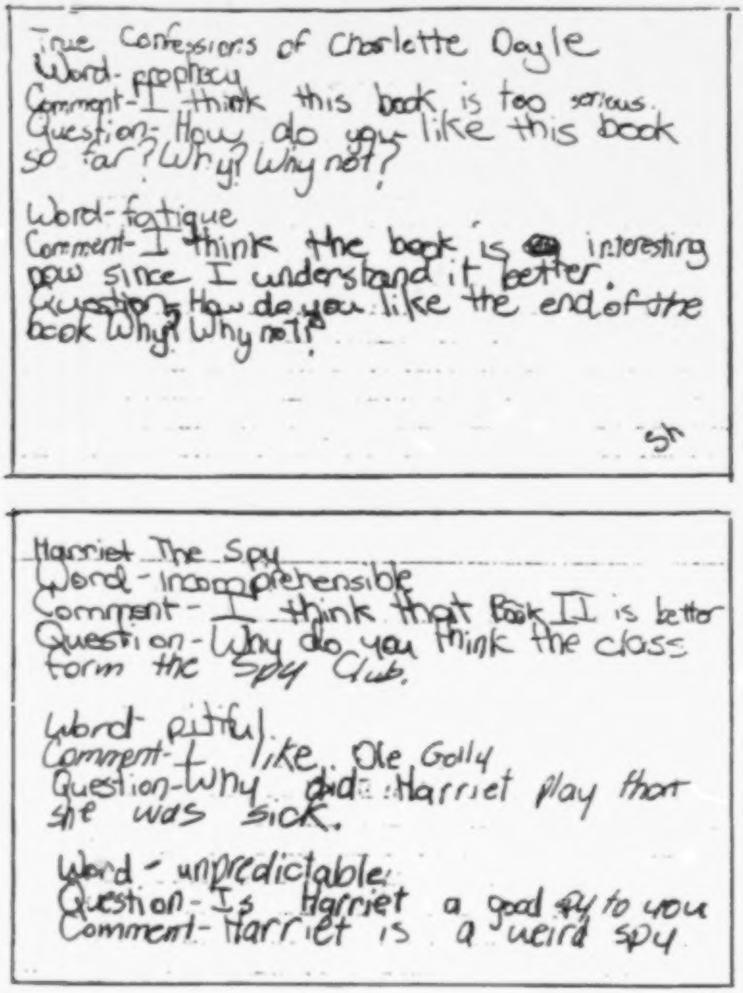

Figure 2. Note Card of Student Generated Ideas Prepared for Peer-Led Discussion

True Confessions of Charlette Doyle
Word- prophecy
Comment- I think this book is too serious.
Question- How do you like this book so far? Why? Why not?

Word- fatique
Comment- I think the book is [illegible] interesting now since I understand it better.
Question- How do you like the end of the book Why? Why not?

Sh

Harriet The Spy
Word- incomprehensible
Comment- I think that Book II is bettor
Question- Why do you think the class form the Spy Club.

Word- pitiful
Comment- I like Ole Golly
Question- Why did Harriet play that she was sick.

Word- unpredictable
Question- Is Harriet a good spy to you
Comment- Harriet is a weird spy

Three students were selected for case study based on their degree of experience with Literature Club, levels of active participation, and gender. Each was a member of a different literature club group. Sally, a friendly, outgoing African American female, had two years experience with literature club and was a consistently active member who often conferred with her peers on ideas. Kim, an African American female new to literature club described herself as "always quiet" but was an intently observant member responding with active body language. Tony, an African-American male with four years of experience with literature clubs was active, independent and self-assured as a dominant member of his group who enjoyed being leader and thoroughly offering his good ideas.

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Figure 3. Post-it Notes of Student Generated Ideas Prepared for Peer-led Discussion

(T/F) I think that Captain Jaggery should have not call charlotte Mr. Doyle that is unrespectful What if somebody call him Mrs. Jaggery

(SS) Charlotte believes in herself because she is willing to do what the captain ordered. (T/F)

I also agree with "Harriet about that "Monopoly" is boring it is complicated and Boring!!

SS.

I think that everybody sucks up to Beth Ellen Hansen because She is rich maybe they just wants her money!! $

I think that Harriet is too interested in her notebook in school thats why she doesn't understand math.

I think that Ole Golly was a good role model to Harriet because Harriet always remember what she said.

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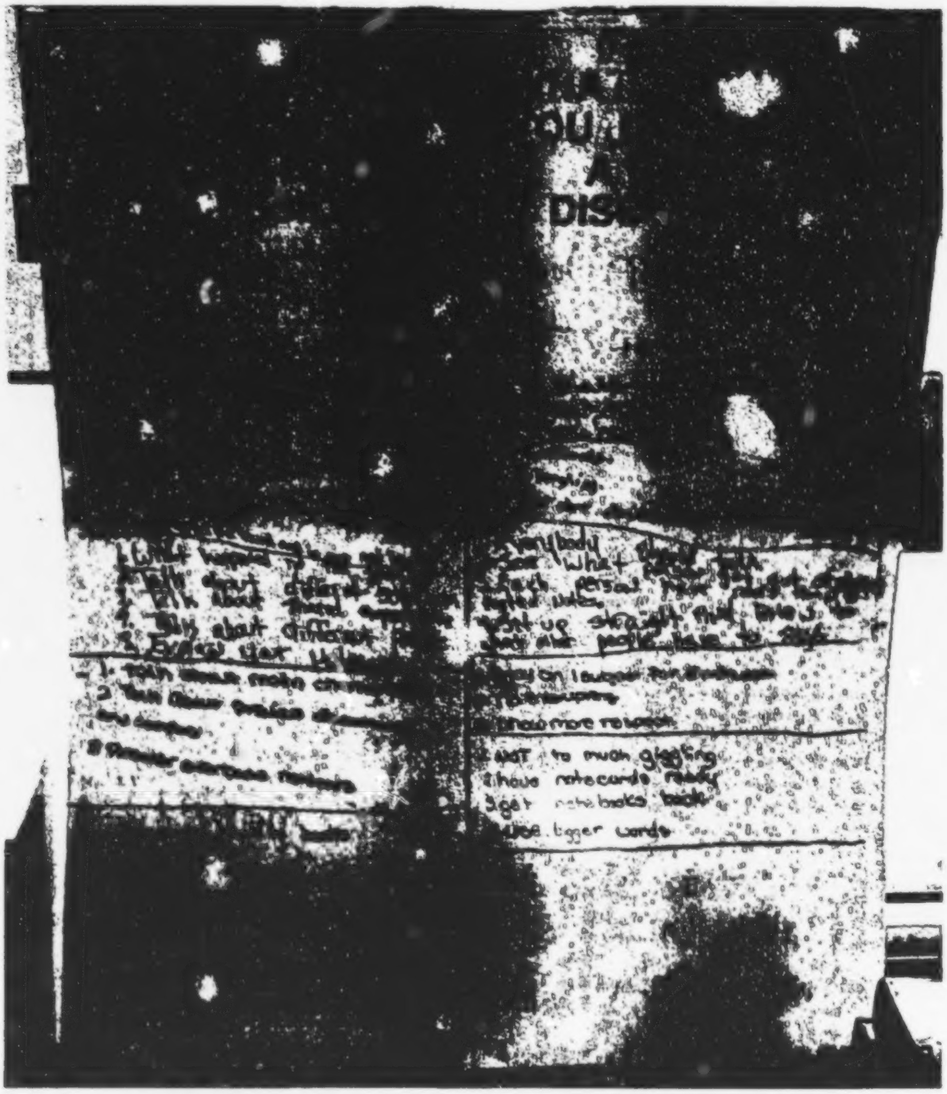
Figure 4. Reflective Chart Generated by Literature Club Groups



NOT to much giggling
have notecards ready
3 get notebooks back
use bigger words

Results of the Study

Analysis of data revealed categories related to what students said about peer-led discussion that described factors that students felt influenced discussion. More specifically they told of what worked to make a good discussion, what did not work and what could be done to improve their discussion sessions. These descriptions were both varied and similar among the three case students of this study.

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What Worked

Sally told of the importance of talk about characters of a story as she recalled "I also think we had a good discussion because now we understand the book more and we know how mean Captain Jaggery is." During group reflection she added, "I think we should talk about the minor characters" and several sessions later revisited this idea offering "I think we should talk more about the grownups [in the story]."

Sally offered perspective on benefits of cognitive interaction through discussion as she briefly told that "the most important thing is to learn how to relate to the question or word that they're asking." She described one discussion session when "It worked because you talk about [the book] and get other people's opinions, then you'll understand it more." This works, she later added, "because you ask questions. Then, they would answer for you and then you understand it."

In an interview Sally told how being able to develop their own questions and ideas has affected literature club discussions. "I think it is more funnier now than doing regular discussion that we did before like just explaining the vocabulary words and the questions.". Students using self-selected ideas recorded on note cards instead of using assigned notebooks made a difference "because then, they would understand the book more since they pick a word . . . question . . . and comment about the book." Later she affirmed that these student-generated ideas were important. "I think we make a difference because we're saying everything. We just talking about the book, but the book doesn't really give, it gives interest in the group, but we just ask a question and that gives people interest."

Sally reflected on preparation structures used in discussion as she decided Post-it notes were the best for getting discussion going. At one point she said this is because of "People's opinions, maybe, you might not understand one page, and then if they read about it then you understand what's happening." At another point she told that she likes to use Post-it notes "because I get more feedback and then I understand the group more and what they thinking." She addressed the potential drawback of the Post-it notes, the impromptu nature of writing while reading. Sally said she would choose to use note cards as "it's more easier and the Post-it notes . . . you might not understand that page and you might write something down but . . . how to say it so...it won't be appropriate for school or something. They say that's dumb or stupid . . ." Sally felt use of the two-column chart developed as the group reflected on discussion is "ok. It's useful, because you know, you get ideas and you want to follow those ideas and make it a really good discussion."

Kim emphasized personal preference as something to talk about and made a point to include her peers. "We can talk about something that we all liked in the book and what we think about the book." She analyzed why others may have a particular preference for a book being read.

> Some people would describe the book as interesting because they don't believe in ghosts and all that kind of stuff, and some people would rate it different than some people would. Because some people like books like The Boggart because they think it's interesting this one person knew about the Boggart and he was hiding it and he didn't want anybody to know about it. . . .

Kim told of the importance of participation as she described the best discussion sessions as when "everybody was participating, even the people that was quiet" and when "we actually took turns." She advised "Don't, like, interrupt in the middle, because that would not be respectful to the others."

In her first interview Kim talks about factors that contribute to a good discussion focusing on reviewing the rules "because if you don't never talk about the rules... how would they know if they were breaking a rule or not? And, then . . . everybody [would be] interrupting and fighting and everything." In her second interview she told about using note cards. "Well, the note cards helped with our discussion . . . the whole discussion [is] from the note cards because we have a word, a comment, a question and . . . it gets the discussion going." Note cards helped "and if they didn't have anything to say, then we have our cards that we can get our discussion from."

Tony offered that a good discussion is one where "we could talk about different stuff instead of spending five or ten minutes on one subject." In the next group session, he added, "we should stay on one subject . . . for five minutes . . . no, for two minutes." In his third interview he reemphasized the characteristics of conversation over question-answer patterns.

> I think we need to stay on one subject to have an actual discussion, like, when you talk to a friend and you're supposed to be having a discussion, you don't, hey, did you hear about those new shoes? Yeah. Oh, did you see? You don't keep going on. You discuss about one subject because it wasn't like, somebody would ask a question, a couple of people would answer. Then we would move on to something else, but I like to ask a question and stay on that subject.

Tony told of the importance of participation but went on to detail his own issue. "I like to participate in the discussion and sometimes, I happen to talk too much because I'm trying to get out what I'm trying to say and what's on my mind, and I say it and I get cut off by the leader sometimes."

During his second interview Tony described how he liked to use Post-it notes as a way to organize his ideas for discussion that "we would like stick them on our book, . . . on a page so we could have our ideas . . . of what we thought." He details one of his Post-it notes.

> I remember one. I forgot what page it was on but like, it said, I forgot. Mrs. Smith, Gordy's mother, it said she wasn't smiling or frowning, so I had thought, so I wrote on my post-it note that she wasn't smiling or frowning. What was the expression on her face? That was the question I was going to do.

In the same interview he also said that he "liked the notebook better" and when asked why detailed management issues, how it was easier to keep track of the notebook. "But that note card . . . people lost theirs . . . they were so small . . . put them in our desk, throw them away." In a group discussion he suggested "we should like a little more Post-it notes, but try not to say all of them . . . because you got to give somebody else a chance to say something."

In his final interview Tony lamented "I needed my notebook, I'd be able to go over the words I thought was interesting, but without our notebooks, I don't like it. I need my notebook back." Yet he went on to surmise why they were no longer using notebooks, aware that "[Miss S] wanted us to get into an actual discussion with our note cards and things like that." When asked if the notebook worked that way he answered, "No, because we just go through our review but with our note cards and Post-it notes, we have our own little opinion." He further offered "I like to get grades. I like to get the grades that I receive for what I do in work" and he described a good discussion: "that time I had all my work done and my character journal . . . I was ready for discussion."

What Didn't

Sally was aware of what made the discussion boring like when "we've been doing the same thing for so long, you get used to it. Then . . . you get bored . . ." and "because it was boring we didn't understand the book as well, and it was very quiet at the discussion . . ." She compared these types of discussion with those related to another book, suggesting the quality of the book can contribute to the boredom. "It was just so boring, because nobody had anything to say . . . Matilda, that book was more, like, funny and everything, but this book was more serious."

Sally described a situation when boredom was a result of group members not being prepared.

> It was in, still fourth grade and mostly nobody was done. Only . . . two people was done, myself and this other girl . . . Like, if somebody had something to say, it would only be us two. It was kind of getting boring because nobody would contribute, or nobody would say anything because they didn't do their work . . . That's the most important part about being in [the program]. You've got to do more work than you do in regular classes.

She detailed challenges of taking a leadership role emphasizing the hard part of being a mediating leader.

> It's like you have to pick people that want to talk, but then a whole bunch of people just want to talk at one time. You call on one person, and then, they might, they were talking loud through the discussion, and then, people might get mad at you or something like that, and then, that was really hard, and then you pick on them and then, they're talking and it gets confusing. It gets like, it's like a discussion, but then you just arguing.

Kim told how when they "had to use bridging phrases, [scripted linking phrases] it really wasn't interesting, because we had to wait 'til everyone was done and it was very boring." "When you just do it from your notebook, then it just be . . . boring." Staying on one topic for discussion "got really boring" and in so doing "some people don't even get to share their note cards." Kim told of times when discussion was only "ok, because most people didn't participate because they didn't get a chance to read the whole book so they didn't have anything to say . . ."

Tony warned that discussions would be boring if there was no laughter, no jokes. "A real discussion is supposed to be fun, in my opinion." But he also admonished that discussions would get out of hand if the teacher was not present. "We know not to take advantage of whatever [the teacher] is doing. I mean, if we have a substitute, we will act up . . . When Ms. S is there we have to have civilized behavior discussion, a regular nice discussion." When asked what difference her presence made Tony replied, "because she's our teacher and we know she don't take anything."

Tony did not feel the group reflective chart was helpful to discussion because "we really don't do a review . . . We don't go over it. Do we use this check and things like that to make sure we're using stuff."

Suggestions Made

Clearly Sally felt students should have more control of their literature clubs saying that "the group should decide [how far to read], because it might be a point that you trying to answer a question . . . and it's on another chapter." She suggested reading as far as needed to find out what you want to know. "If we read more than we used to...we'd understand the book, and like [not] stop at a section when it started getting good and then you just get all mad because the other section was just boring." And that "we should pick the questions . . . you know what you read." And she advised "Don't be serious, like we was in our last book."

Projects and additional activities may add to literature club where "maybe at the end of the book you could do, like, a play or something, tell them about the book at the end of the class." These projects "would get us interested in the books, because then everybody would want to talk and have their own opinions." She told of making travel brochures and a castle going into much detail as she suggests making "like a poster, or a little skit, or just a poem."

In her first interview Kim made the suggestion of cutting down on the number of words to look up. This task related to use of the notebook, and she described working hard but not being able to find the words in the book, being "so tired at night trying to do literature so I can be in discussion group. And my mother, she just gets sad because I don't be getting it done."

Monitoring time was offered as a way to facilitate discussion, with the use of a stopwatch to pace individual turns at talking or using the clock to allot time. "Sally would be leader for 15, 20 minutes and then, Cynthi will come in and be leader for the next 15, 20 minutes, and then Lena . . ."

Being more creative was an issue for Kim, as she felt "if we have more projects, it would be more interesting, and people, like, would be excited sharing their ideas." She suggested to "dress up as that character" or "build a Boggart or what he might look like. Or, they can build Castle Keep or maybe just a sculpture or something they liked in the book. Or say a line from the character that they liked." Capturing the social collaborative nature of learning Kim said the group members could work together, for example, "try to draw Maggie . . . so you can show it to the group and maybe someone can add to your drawing . . . imagine how she'll look." "Like, if the book is *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* . . . bake some cookies or something and put some chocolate on top . . . everybody should bring something that involved the book." These projects should be shown to other groups for feedback: "they comment on it and . . . give you a compliment." She emphasized that each person should do something different and that "you should make it yourself, without your parents helping you, then that showed that you have creativity."

She detailed her suggestion of prizes as additional motivation. "If you bring in your project you get a prize. One person be responsible for the prize. If they can't bring the prizes in, then they will have to wait 'til next discussion to get their prize. If they do another project, they get double prizes. So, that's what I think."

To assure that all group members have a turn to talk Tony suggested to "start from this person . . . go all around . . . keep rotating clockwise." He suggested that in group they "could probably say like, compare the movie to the books, compare the movies to the books." Tony revealed his literary knowledge as he suggested associative response as content of discussion. "I think we should . . . talk about shared experience that we have like a reader's response, like a shared experience of what we have of the main character's shared experience." Tony thought the number of questions shared should be increased "because the questions are really fun and interesting." He offered another issue related to questions discussed.

> I think we should make the questions, not easy questions that kindergartners can do. Maybe some challenging questions. You have to prove that you read the whole book for getting an understanding out of it, get your own questions.

And logistically he suggested

> "I think our note cards should be a tad bit more bigger and like, I think that they should be a lot bigger because we have words. We have little words like "brief" and "extra." Well, "extraordinary" is okay . . . I think we need bigger words because we're moving on and we need to know bigger words in 6th grade so we can, like, just know our vocabulary and stuff like that."

Summary

Many factors were addressed by the three cases as they described what influenced peer-led discussions. There were similarities and differences among topics addressed as students described what worked in discussions, what did not, and made suggestions for improving peer-led discussions. All three believed it was important to be prepared when coming to group discussions, but they saw this preparedness in differing ways. Sally found Post-it™ notes useful for bringing ideas to the discussion, but Tony struggled with keeping track of these and the note cards. He liked use of the notebook for this organizational element however, like Sally and Kim, believed content generated for the notebook did not facilitate discussion. Kim expressed the need to have rules for discussion and Tony thought the teacher's presence was a necessary external control for his group. Tony and Sally thought the student generated two-column reflective chart had potential if it was actually referred to.

Both Sally and Kim had detailed ideas about projects that could be developed and shared to add to group discussions. Kim and Tony had ideas about how to monitor time to insure greater participation of all members. Tony and Sally both felt students should generate topics for discussion, and Sally added that they should also decide on how far to read for the next session.

Discussion

As evidenced students can reveal their metacognitive understanding of group discussions in a variety of meaningful ways. Flavell (1979) describes metacognitive knowledge as consisting "primarily of knowledge or beliefs about what factors or variables act and interact in what ways to affect the course and outcome of cognitive enterprises" (p. 907). Given the opportunity, students are able to consider the factors that affect peer-led discussion and articulate these in thoughtful ways. For example, confirming the work of Wells and Chang-Wells (1996), Sally related how collaborative talk helps comprehension of text read and how this talk allowed exploring of ideas (Barnes, 1992). Students have clear ideas about variables that affect the quality of peer-led discussion.

These students have developed metacognitive awareness about themselves as discussants and about the roles that students play in the discussion, reflecting on social interaction within discussion. Tony was aware of the variety of roles and the challenge of leadership in peer-led discussions (Almasi, 1996) as he related his own struggles with these aspects of the process. They wanted to participate in peer-led discussion, but they also wanted to create projects that extended their interpretation of the text to share with their peers at the discussion table. Kim, in particular detailed personal response to literature (Bleich, 1978) and felt this creative element would liven up the discussions.

Student talk about factors that influence discussion reveals the depth to which they understand their experiences in peer-led discussions. This study presented evidence that students are "the ultimate insiders and experts" (Erikson & Shultz, 1992, p. 480) and can reveal their metacognitive understanding of peer-led discussions in meaningful ways. While these findings are limited to the context of this classroom and emerge from three case studies, indications are that students may benefit from the opportunity to talk about talk. How can further opportunities be facilitated to increasingly allow and encourage students to develop their depth of awareness of the processes of peer-led discussion?

Researchers and teachers have much to gain from listening to the voices of students as they offer their perceptions of peer-led discussions throughout their experiences with the structures and processes of the discussion. For example, what happens when students are allowed to structure their own discussions and are provided with opportunities to reflect and develop on their own? What happens when students are introduced to ways of writing in preparation for talk and allowed the choices to use or not or to develop their own formats?

Varying descriptions of peer-led discussions emerged from the fifth grade students in this study. The three case students also varied in their experience in peer-led discussions as part of literature club, ranging from little experience to several years of experience with traditional structures. Whereas the effect of experience is not clear within the scope of this study, findings point to experience as an element for further research. What happens over time when children are introduced to literature clubs early and develop peer-led skills with reflection integral to the process? What scaffolds can a teacher provide to facilitate students' proficiency with peer-led discussion early? Sally's declaration offers interesting prospects.

> I think everybody should do literature clubs, even if you're not in [the gifted and talented program], maybe even in kindergarten, maybe read those picture books. I think it's fun because [you] get to read everything. It's more funnier than just reading the book and just flipping over the pages, without really understanding the book.

Sally has captured the empowering possibilities of students becoming what Wells and Chang-Wells (1996) describe as literate thinkers. Perhaps students' further insights into these processes can not only add to program development but can build skills for lifelong reflective learning.

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TEACHING METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE HIGHER LEVEL THINKING IN ADOLESCENTS

Thesis Award

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Abstract

The purpose of this research project was to explore the effects of teaching metacognitive strategies to adolescents in the context of a language arts class. Teaching was divided into four phases: teacher modeling of the strategy, guided practice, independent practice with feedback, and application using everyday texts. As the project progressed, it was noted that students were more willing to work independently, thought more critically, and were able to apply what they had learned to real life situations. Additionally, these results were validated by significant growth in posttest scores.

Introduction

American secondary schools are under fire from government, business, and parents. Publications such as *A Nation at Risk* (Caroll, 1990) underscore the so-called failure of American secondary schools to meet the needs of young people. Many believe that high schools must change teaching practices if they are going to produce the type of graduates who can compete in the job market of today and the future. In today's Information Age, reading and memorizing facts is not enough. Individuals must possess higher order thinking skills that enable them to process the information that they acquire.

A SCANS Report for America 2000 (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991) identified critical thinking skills as one of the foundation competencies necessary for individuals entering the work force. Employers want employees who possess the following qualities: (1) innovation and adaptability, (2) ability to learn independently, (3) ability to listen and comprehend, (4) ability to think creatively and solve problems, (5) ability to function effectively as a team member, (6) ability to fill a leadership role, and (7) ability to communicate well orally (Carnevale, Gainer, Meltzer, Holland, 1988).

As with most problems, there are a number of reasons why secondary schools lack effectiveness in producing higher-level thinkers. One reason is that the curriculum in many schools is designed to present a large body of material to students. In an effort to do this, teachers frequently employ the lecture method of presentation so that they can "cover" all the material in the curriculum. In the process, topics are not addressed in depth, and teachers fail to provide formal instruction that could lead to the development of higher level thinking skills (Cawelti, 1989, p. 30). Additionally, many students remain passive during the lecture process, which is not conducive to learning. This type of system is flawed because, "If an information society is to be successful, a majority of the population must be capable of functioning at higher levels of problem solving and innovation" (Tewel, 1989, p.75).

Another deterrent to higher level thought is the current emphasis on standardized test scores. Standardized test questions require one right answer; questions that require one right answer do not encourage critical thinking, which seeks multiple answers. Because critical thinking is diverse, it is not easily evaluated with an objective test. Unfortunately, teachers prepare students for standardized tests because they are the yardstick by which both students and teachers are evaluated (Savage, 1989). A reflection of the standardized test mentality is the fact that seventy to eighty percent of the questions asked by teachers require factual recall. This is in spite of the fact that eighty to ninety percent of what students learn through factual questioning is forgotten. Research indicates, however, that higher-level questions elicit higher level cognitive processes, and eighty to eighty-five percent of what students learn by that type of questioning is retained (Savage, 1989). While teaching higher-level thinking skills may be more challenging than giving a lecture, it should produce students who are more employable than those now being graduated.

Considering the need for adolescents to reason above the literal level, this researcher began to explore methods of enhancing higher level thinking within the context of a language arts class. It was decided that the focus of the study would be the enhancement of higher level thinking through the instruction of metacognitive strategies as part of the process of reading and composition.

Literature Review

Research seems to confirm that critical thinking is a teachable skill. "Students who undergo thinking instruction generally do score better on outcome measures than their counterparts who do not undergo such instruction," (Chance, 1986; Nickerson, 1984; Nickerson, Perkins, & Smith, 1985: Sternberg & Kastoor, 1986) as cited by Sormunen, 1994, p.172. One process that lends itself to the development of higher level thinking skills is the process of reading. As an individual gains in reading skill, that reader should be able to understand literal and inferred information, summarize ideas in his own words, interpret the material, analyze data, use data to solve problems, and critique the material that was read.

Studies seem to indicate that skilled readers possess several attributes. The most important attribute is that the reader is an active participant in the reading process. Reading comprehension involves more than simply decoding an author's words. Yet, many unskilled readers believe that their goal is to decode words rather than to gain meaning from what they have read (Canney & Winograd, 1979). In fact, many secondary students depend solely on the teacher for understanding of a text, and some avoid reading completely. The goal of teachers should be to wean readers from dependence on the teacher to independence.

Skilled readers use metacognitive strategies to derive meaning from text. Baker and Brown (1984, p. 355) define metacognition as, "the knowledge and control one has over his or her own thinking and learning activities, including reading." When readers use metacognition, they are aware of their thinking and use conscious and subconscious actions to gain meaning. Research from the 1980's indicted that very little class time was being spent in comprehension instruction or actual reading for that matter. After extensive observation of classroom teachers, it was concluded that most teachers simply gave workbook assignments that asked questions about text content. These activities tested students' understanding but did little to teach comprehension strategies. This practice was most detrimental to poor comprehenders who were less likely than strong readers to invent strategies of their own.

Strategies

In response to the obvious need for comprehension instruction, much research in the 1980's was geared toward trying to find methods of teacher-directed comprehension strategy instruction. Research showed that comprehension could be taught. One widely researched model, explicit instruction, involves four phases: (1) teacher modeling and explanation of a strategy, (2) guided practice during which teachers give students increased responsibility for task completion and performance monitoring, (3) independent practice with feedback, and (4) application of the strategy using everyday texts (Pearson & Dole, 1987).

Prereading Strategies

Logical reasoning studies have shown that prior knowledge can affect a reader's ability to comprehend text. In the studies, the use of prior knowledge and experience has typically been viewed as helpful in inferring information not literally stated in the text. The effects of prior knowledge on text comprehension are so strong that researchers have explored training students to access prior knowledge when making inferences about what they have read. When students do this, comprehension and retention improve (Hanson & Pearson, 1983).

Another prereading activity involves the teacher developing a few prereading questions that are designed to activate prior knowledge and elicit predictions about what might happen in the story. A few skillfully constructed prereading questions can aid students in the process of relating text to prior knowledge, thus preparing the students to comprehend the text. Such questions produce a higher level of comprehension than questions with a literal or factual orientation. Additionally, prereading questions can pave the way for inferential comprehension. After reading, students may compare and contrast the original predictions with the actual outcome and evaluate why the discrepancies occurred (Pearson, 1985).

Additional prereading activities include Donna Ogle's K-W-L strategy, which has the added benefit of providing an effective tool for the visual learner (Huffman, 1998) and semantic maps. Semantic maps may be compared to document learning or used as a tool to activate prior knowledge. Collaborative mapping also provides social interaction in conjunction with academic content, which encourages a higher level of thinking (Wolff, 1994).

During Reading

According to Baker & Brown (1984), metacognition during reading can be divided into three categories: (1) cognitive awareness: reader is knowledgeable about his cognitive resources and has evaluated the current reading task, (2) cognitive monitoring: reader's ability to monitor comprehension and solve problems, and (3) compensation strategies: the reader's use of fix-up strategies to use when comprehension fails. Students who are able to self-monitor for comprehension and employ fix-up strategies will become independent readers.

There are numerous strategies that can be taught to aid students in monitoring their comprehension and in using fix-up strategies. One method of monitoring comprehension is self-questioning. Teachers should model the strategy, keeping Benjamin Bloom's cognitive domain contained in his Taxonomy of Educational Objectives in mind. Another monitoring technique, reciprocal teaching (Palincsar and Brown, 1986), requires the reader to summarize the main content, formulate questions, clarify the text, and predict future content. Self-questioning is important because it sets the course for problem solving, stirs the thought process, and stimulates the imagination (Williamson, 1996).

The ultimate goal of reading is the integration of the ideas in the text into a coherent unit. Many texts are incomplete in that they do not present every piece of information relevant to making sense of the message. To gain understanding in that type of situation, a reader is required to infer the missing information; a process which can occur if the reader is able to integrate text information with prior knowledge. Learning to infer can improve literal skills and result in increased retention. Through modeling, the teacher demonstrates that it may be necessary to reread text or to read ahead before an inference may be made. With practice, the student becomes accustomed to looking at text carefully while monitoring knowledge and searching for information. A self-monitoring checklist may be used to aid in making inferences (Carr, 1989).

After Reading

Processing of text does not conclude when the final word is read. Post reading activities should lead secondary students to assume an autonomous role in the reading process, which in turn enhances critical thinking and other higher-order thinking skills. An adolescent's cognitive development usually involves the ability to consider possibilities, and to consider ones own thought process. While many adolescents should be thinking more abstractly and solving problems in a logical fashion, one study found that only thirty-three percent of students attain formal operation by graduation (Donley, 1991). Because many of the teaching practices presently in use fail to involve higher-order thinking skills, students are not advancing developmentally. Stimulating activities requiring active student participation should be helpful in changing this situation.

There are many postreading activities that can facilitate the processing of text. Among them are inference guides and oral discussions that encourage students to return to the text to justify their interpretations (Caron, 2000). Such aids help them take control of their learning and thus become independent readers (Kletzien & Balocke, 1994). One model for discussion is the Paideia Seminar, developed at the National Paideia Center of the University of North Carolina.

Swartz and Parks (1993) assert that critical and creative thinking should be infused naturally into the content area. Students should be taught how to use the information and concepts that they learn in school to make decisions and solve problems effectively. Oral discussion, supported by verbal maps and graphic organizers, is often followed with projects, including compositions. Because composition requires greater evaluation of ideas than brief response activities, students who write in response to reading are more prone to examine what they have read in depth as opposed to students who complete workbook sheets. Schlawin (1980) contends that writing aids in cognitive development to such an extent that the upper ranges of Bloom's taxonomy could not be reached without the use of some form of writing.

After a review of literature, this researcher concluded that a study should be conducted in which adolescents would be taught to use metacognitive strategies before, during, and after reading in an effort to enhance higher level thinking.

Null Hypothesis

There will be no difference between the scores on a Metacognitive Strategies Index and Gates MacGinite test before and after intervention to teach metacognitive strategies.

Method

Subjects

The twenty-three students enrolled in this researcher's language arts class, grade 9, served as subjects in the study. These students were used due to their accessibility to this researcher. Four males and nineteen females, ages fourteen and fifteen, composed the class of Caucasian students. Six of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch. Using the Gates-MacGinite Reading Test as an assessment tool, the students earned grade scores from 6.7 to 12.0 in reading comprehension prior to the beginning of instruction, providing a diverse instructional base.

Testing

The students were pre and post tested using the Metacognitive Strategies Index, a tool used to evaluate students' awareness of metacomprehension strategies used before, during, and after reading (Schmitt, 1990). Additionally, the Gates-MacGinite Reading and Comprehension Test Level 7/9 was used to measure improvement in vocabulary and reading comprehension.

Method

Prior to the beginning of the four month study, students were directed to read *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960) and then prepare a literary response project of their choice. On the first day of the study, the Paideia Seminar was introduced and modeled by the teacher. Seminars are designed to increase understanding of ideas and values by means of Socratic questioning using active participation in the discussion of primary source materials. A teacher-facilitated discussion encourages students to think critically, solve problems, make decisions, resolve conflicts and apply knowledge and skills to new situations. The first seminar discussion, which lasted approximately one hour, was based on *To Kill a Mockingbird* and a poem entitled "Southern Cop"

(Brown, 1986, p. 674). A teacher prepared test containing both literal and inferential questions followed the day after the seminar.

Next, students worked cooperatively to construct a concept web based on the term Nazi. Prereading questions were then generated and recorded in the students' reading journals in anticipation of reading *The Wave* (Strasser, 1981). Before starting the novel, students were directed to follow the reading of each chapter by: (1) summarizing and reacting to the plot, (2) writing any questions generated by the reading, and (3) answering questions posed in previous readings. Reciprocal teaching techniques were modeled following the reading of chapter one of the book.

Through teacher modeling and the use of inference guides (see Appendix A), students progressed from supporting inferences generated by the teacher to generating inferences of their own. Upon completion of the novel, students (1) added to the semantic map created prior to reading, (2) discussed the anticipation questions, (3) completed an inference guide based on the entire novel, and (4) completed a test that emphasized higher level thinking skills.

Students selected a second novel related in theme to *The Wave* (see Appendix B for a list of the novels available to students). A K-W-L chart was completed as a prereading activity. Reading journals and reciprocal teaching groups were again used. Also, fix-up strategies such as rereading and the use of context clues were introduced. The same procedures were used as students read an additional novel (see Appendix B).

Finally, students read magazine and newspaper articles concerning a textbook controversy that occurred in 1974-75. This reading was followed by research of a type of censorship that interested the students. Students reacted to the topic of censorship through persuasive compositions and a Paideia Seminar.

Results

Results from the pre and post testing of the Metacomprehension Strategy Index and the Gates-MacGinite were analyzed using a T-test. The data supports that significant growth ($p \leq .001$) occurred in metacognitive skills as a result of instruction. Consequently, the null hypothesis that there will be no difference between the scores on a Metacomprehension Strategies Index and Gates MacGinite test before and after intervention to teach metacognitive strategies has been rejected because there has been a significant difference in scores before and after intervention (see Table 1).

In addition to noting concrete test results, writing samples from the *To Kill a Mockingbird* test were compared with the essay written as the culminating activity in the study. Samples were assessed by comparing the thinking skills demonstrated in the students' writing with those outlined in Bloom's Taxonomy.

Table 1. Results of Metacomprehension Strategy Index and Gates-MacGinite Pre and Post Instruction

	Pre test Mean	Post test Mean	Difference
MSI	13.0	21.0	8.0•
GM comprehension	38.9	42.4	3.5•
GM vocabulary	37.2	41.0	3.8•

•*p*≤.001

•*MSI=Metacomprehension Strategy Index* *GM=Gates-MacGinite*

Writing Samples

The following paragraphs are students' "Essay" answers to questions posed on *To Kill a Mockingbird* test.

Question: How would Scout's childhood experiences help make her an accepting and tolerant person?

Student response: I think the most valuable experience was when Calpurnia took the children to church. Half of the congregation could not read, and even if they had been able to read, the church did not have enough hymn books for everyone. It showed Scout that the African-American people were not treated well. Also, when Tom tried to escape, they shot him dead instead of running after him. Question: There were numerous forms of prejudice shown in *To Kill a Mockingbird* in addition to the prejudice toward African-Americans. List and discuss at least two additional forms of discrimination detailed in this novel.

Student response: There was a prejudice against women because they could not work outside the home. Also, there was [prejudice] against poor people. Other people thought they were worthless.

Student response: Other forms of prejudice were against Arthur Radley just because he had the mind of a child or was crazy. He never came out of the house and cut newspapers to make a scrapbook. The other form was against poor people. They would look down on the Ewells and Cunninghams because they were poor.

Post-Instruction Writing Samples

The following paragraphs are the conclusions from persuasive papers written by students on the topic of censorship.

Censorship of the News Media

The examples in this paper have shown that an uncensored news media has broadcast materials that promote hatred against minority groups, are harmful to the physical and mental health of innocent children, and that can threaten national security. These cases are evidence to support my position that the news media should be censored. Whoever said that, "If you control the media, you control the people," certainly gave a good description of the media-run world in which we live. Unfortunately, it seems that the media doesn't know the difference between rumor and truth, or they just don't care. It is sad to think that we live in a world in which people believe that if they see it on television, then it must be true.

Censorship of Books

We learn from those who dared to be different, even scandalous. If everyone who ever questioned the status quo of literature, the arts, or society had kept silent, the world would have long ago stagnated. Our world would be a dull, scary place to live. Children and adults alike look for characters in books that they relate to in some way. If these people, with problems similar to the ones faced daily, were erased, imagine what confusion and self-doubt would occur. It is a sad fact that not everyone has someone to turn to; they must find understanding outside of family and friends. Therefore, book banning is not only unconstitutional but also irresponsible. If books are so changed that they are not realistic, characters posses sterile mouths for instance, then they may no longer provide help to the people who need them most. Stop the censoring and help ensure a better future where imagination, idealism, and originality may thrive.

Limitations

One limitation of the current research is the small size and limited diversity of the group that received instruction. Consequently, the results of the study cannot be generalized for all students. The results are also limited to the impact of metacognitive strategy instruction in a particular setting with one class of students.

Discussion

The students began the initial seminar with a spirit of enthusiasm. Both the poem and novel that they had read contained obvious stereotypical images of African Americans. Students recognized and commented upon the literal elements of the selections. Once the more literal observations had been made, it was necessary for the teacher to model inferences that could be made with more analytical thought. Additionally, the majority of the responses made on the test of *To Kill a Mockingbird* were of a literal nature. While students recalled the basic events of the novel, they had difficulty interpreting facts, analyzing events, or drawing conclusions from the facts presented in the novel.

When students began writing journal summaries related to the first novel, it was noted that their comments were very literal in nature. As the students received instruction and an opportunity to practice, they began to react on a more interpretive/analytical level. It appeared that the skills being learned through the inference training were being transferred to the other reading activities as well. By the time the reading of *The Wave* was completed, students were able to successfully draw parallels between the methods of behavior control used in the novel and those used in a variety of societies. Additionally, student test responses for this novel had moved to higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy than those noted on the former novel test. There seemed to be a connection between the depth of the journal entries and the quality of a student's answers on the test. Those who not only summarized the plot of the story but also reacted to it in the journal provided answers on the test that were more representative of higher level thinking. As students continued to read and respond to their reading, it was noted that they were more willing to work independently, leaving the security of a group or partner setting. In discussing the various novels being read, students were able to analyze the thematic thread running through all of the novels. Upon completion of the novels, students were asked to consider and explore their position concerning one type of censorship that was of personal interest. They were given the task of writing a persuasive essay that expressed their personal views with the support of research data. While this task proved challenging to the students, the product was much more thoughtful and analytical than writing samples produced earlier in the term. For example, they were able to synthesize historical events with personal experience to evaluate behaviors and values. They were also able to formulate their own rationale for acceptable behavior.

The final activity was a seminar based on an actual textbook controversy. After commenting about the "objectionable" materials, students were able to look beyond the surface events and analyze the underlying causes of the controversy. It was noted that they drew from events in the novels that they had read, well known historical events, data from their recent research, as well as personal experience in their desire to understand what had happened in a case of textbook censorship. Eventually, they proposed solutions that were quite insightful and mature. This final seminar demonstrated a level of thought that was much more creative and analytical than that of the first seminar. The rise in the level of thought in both oral and written discussion seems to have occurred as a result of the metacognitive instruction.

Validation of the effectiveness of the metacognitive and inference instruction was the improvement of scores on the Gates-McGinite Test. The significant post test gain on the Gates-McGinite seems to validate the gain in metacomprehension indicated by the Metacomprehension Strategies Index. The gain on the vocabulary subtest of the Gates-McGinite is of particular interest because it may be a reflection of the extent to which the inference training and metacognitive strategies teaching affects vocabulary acquisition. Many of the ideas that arose through the course of the research involved new concepts, which led to rich discussion by the students. This discussion placed considerable emphasis upon conceptual vocabulary. Certainly, further research may be needed to explore just what the relevant factors are, but it seems evident that the vocabulary gain may well be related to this intensive focus on deep meaning in text. This does suggest that vocabulary learning may result from such attention and discussion in class work as more beneficial to new vocabulary growth than a more traditional focus on isolated vocabulary.

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Appendix A. Inference Guide—Chapters 2 & 3 of *The Wave*

Directions: (1) Read chapters 2 & 3 of *The Wave*. (2) Find at least two examples or quotations to support the following inferences. Write the examples on this sheet.

A. Some of the students were not interested in doing well in their academics or extracurricular activities.

B. Some of Ben's students were not sympathetic to the feelings of other people.

Appendix B. Young Adult Literature

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Davis, O. (1992). *Just like Martin*. NY: Puffin Books.

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PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEORETICAL HORIZONS IN LITERACY EDUCATION

THE INTEGRATION OF CONATION, COGNITION, AFFECT AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT IN LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Based upon a review of relevant literature, the authors propose that conation be treated as a viable component in literacy development. A model of literacy development is suggested that integrates conation, cognition, affect and the social environment as connecting domains that interact and create a synergistic approach to yield successful teaching and learning. This model suggests that four interactive factors operate within successful teaching and learning: child, teacher, text, and task. This model offers several directions for future research in literacy development.

Introduction

The affective and cognitive aspects of literacy development are generally accepted as important for the development and implementation of a truly comprehensive curriculum framework. However, this has not necessarily been the position taken by researchers. Since the publication of "A Nation at Risk" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) documenting the "fall of academic standards," research on the "soft" side of learning has waned. Initiatives and reform efforts of both Republican and Democratic administrations have resulted in rigorous national standards. Specific performance measures have been mandated for all students in many states. Studies examining variables such as motivation, will (conation), and locus of control have been largely absent from national conversations and funding proposals even though these variables have been found to connect to outcome performance measures (Hager and Gable, 1993).

Outcome performance measures are part of "The prevailing teaching and testing technology [that] rests on the assumption that knowledge is objective and can be drilled into passive blank-slate brains, then paraded out on cue" (Brown, 1989, p. 34). Brown asserted further that students should become more involved in "thoughtful literacy." That is, students should evaluate learning, internalize capacities used to evaluate learning, and demonstrate those abilities as they learn to be "performing thinkers, problem solvers, and inquirers" (p. 35). Social, affective, and conative domains may all be integral along with cognitive to the development of "thoughtful literacy."

As the role of personal and cultural interactions relating to language development has been studied the social aspects of the learning process have been given attention. Personal and cultural interaction has been described as being critical to cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). Currently, researchers such as Maurer and Davidson (1999) are calling for teachers to not ignore the affective domain, enthusiasm, and what they call the "power of the heart," in using new technologies in the classroom for teaching the skills of reading and writing. Researchers such as Berlak (1992) and Cooter (1994) have stressed that conation is a domain in its own right and an important component of learning in the way that it links to cognition. However, often educational decisions are made solely on the basis of cognitive performance. Curriculum, textbooks, and lesson plans may be designed based on standardized testing instruments. Behaviors and characteristics of domains other than cognitive involved in the learning process may not be sufficiently scrutinized when making educational decisions.

In this paper, the authors address research related to the conative domain as well as propose research that needs to be conducted in affective areas. Special emphasis will be placed on the importance of the link between the conative domain and the cognitive domain in literacy learning. The authors also propose a theoretical model for the integration of conation, cognition, affect and social environment in literacy development.

Literature Review

A review of the literature revealed there are divergent views of the role of conation in the greater scheme of learning. Conative factors, closely akin to affect, have been described as persistence, desire, determination, and will to learn on the part of students. Gholar, Givens, McPherson, and Riggs (1991) referred to *Good's Dictionary of Education,* which defines the conative domain as "striving or having the power to strive or struggle toward a goal which may be conscious or unconscious; descriptive of one of the three great divisions of the mind or soul (historically), namely, will as contrasted with terms descriptive of feeling (affective) or the power of knowing (cognitive)" (p. 3). Cooter (1994) and Berlak (1992) maintained that conative aspects of human behavior are necessary for a student to function cognitively; that the conative aspects of human behavior, as well as the affective domain, should not be artificially separated from the cognitive domain.

Historically, when conative aspects have been considered, they were merely a subset of the affective domain. Cognitive and affective domains have generally been thought to be the primary domains involved in learning and school achievement. These two domains have been psychometrically dissected as mutually exclusive parts of the learning process (Berlak, 1992). Cognitive aspects have been assessed through intelligence, achievement, and state-developed tests, while interest and attitude inventories have been used to assess affective constructs.

Research by Williams (1997) concluded that both affective and cognitive strategies are necessary to provide a comprehensive degree of self-regulated learning. This complements the premise made by Gholar et al. (1991) that the conative domain may serve as a transformational element in human learning. According to this view, attention to conation can move learning activities which might otherwise be little more than didactic exercises into opportunities for genuine knowledge acquisition. The conative domain, therefore, is an important consideration when developing plans for enhancing student achievement and school improvement.

Tangentially, Snow's (1987) "whole person" perspective stipulated that the integration of cognitive, affective, and conative aspects was necessary for learning to occur. Raven (1992) later described cognitive, affective, and conative as separate but interdependent constructs in the learning process. Raven argued that subsuming conative aspects of human behavior under the affective domain is inappropriate. His contention was that one might be determined to see a task through without enjoying that task, and conversely, one can enjoy a task without seeing it through. In Raven's view "these affective and conative components are an integral part of what we mean by the ability to cognize" (p. 89). The interdependent nature of the three domains suggests they be assessed together to appropriately gauge learning that has occurred. His reasoning is similar to the idea that assessing skills apart from content and schema is artificial and inconsistent with the way humans actually think and operate.

By contrast, Gholar et al. (1991) characterized the conative domain as an overarching construct with affective and cognitive domains being overlapping constructs within. They note; "The conative domain nurtures learning and moves educational strategies from a plurality of parts to a purposeful synergism that promotes the acquisition of high self-esteem and school success" (p. 3). Gholar et al. maintained that conation is an intrinsic force, that when positively applied, results in sustainable school achievement. A poignant example of the power of conation is the experience of the little engine in the story of "The Little Engine that Could" (Piper, 1978).

The conative paradigm suggested by Gholar et al. (1991) identified the conative domain as ". . . a significant underpinning of the learning process" (p. 3). Educators who first seek an understanding of the nature of the conative domain may be able to more effectively monitor and nurture opportunities that facilitate and develop conation within their students. Students may then become intentional and independent learners.

Bringing the affective, cognitive, social, and conative understandings together, Martinez's (1997) model of intentional learning illustrated how learners of varying abilities may ". . . planfully and expertly direct themselves to acquire new knowledge, elaborate and construe meaning, and use intensive, persistent effort to achieve long-term goals" (p. 6). Educators may assist in this endeavor with appropriate guidance in the skillful and appropriate use of strategies that enhance processes involved in their students' acquisition of knowledge.

The Four Domains in Literacy Development

Concerning literacy development, cognitive models (Adams, 1994; Flower & Hayes, 1994; Kintsch, 1994; Rumelhart, 1994; Samuels, 1994; Singer, 1994), models adding the social domain (Goodman, 1994; Ruddell & Unrau, 1994), and models including the affective domain (Mathewson, 1994; Rosenblatt, 1994) have been proposed and tested over the years. Cooter (1994) began studying the conative domain and its role in literacy development by applying the essence of the principles of Mathewson's (1985) research to the work of Raven (1992) and Berlak (1992).

Cooter (1994) identified two behavior styles, achievement and affiliation, as appropriate measures of intrinsic motivation related to reading tasks. He placed these on a factor analysis grid along with effort, energy, and persistence; three conative factors often associated with reading success (Raven, 1992). Cooter proposed using grids as affective and conative assessment measures to provide a more in-depth, although subjective, analysis for selected reading activities and practices. He also suggested that a teacher's conative value styles may be just as critical to learning as the student's. If the conative value styles of both teacher and student are in positive agreement and both are determined to stretch and strive toward maximum achievement, then theoretically, the possibilities for reading success should be realized.

McDermott (1978) suggested that a child's progress in reading is influenced more by the personal relationship the child has developed with the teacher than by the nature of the reading activity. The argument is that children may respond to the feelings the teacher displays when asking them to complete an assignment more than to the activity itself. Implicit in McDermott's theory is that reading is as much a social event or transaction as it is an intellectual one. This premise is supported by Vygotsky's (1978) research related to the social origins of cognition. More recent research in this area has attempted to reveal ways social interaction affects young children's motivation to read (Gambrell,1995; Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, and Afflerbach, 1993).

Based on earlier work by McDermott (1978) and Dechant (1970), Meeks (1987) proposed a model of "affective metacognition," postulating that affect and metacognition (students thinking about what they do and do not know) are so interwoven that they cannot be artificially separated. Building upon Meeks' model, as well as the conative model developed by Gholar et al., the authors proposed a model which integrated conation, cognition, affect, and the social environment of literacy development, not as separate processes, but connected domains that interact and create a synergistic approach to reading (see Figure 1). Four main factors were identified that contribute to this integration: the child, the text, the teacher, and the task. Examining these factors in literacy development, as well as assessment, sets this proposed model apart by including conation as a partner domain. In *The*

Figure 1. Model of Literacy Development

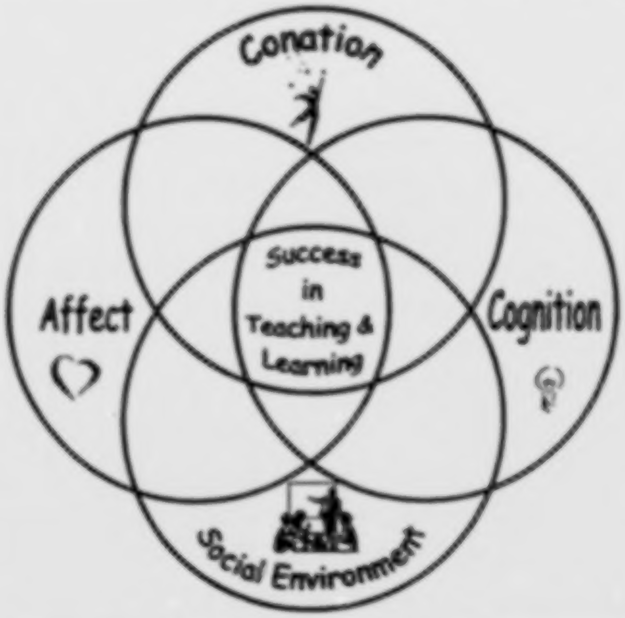

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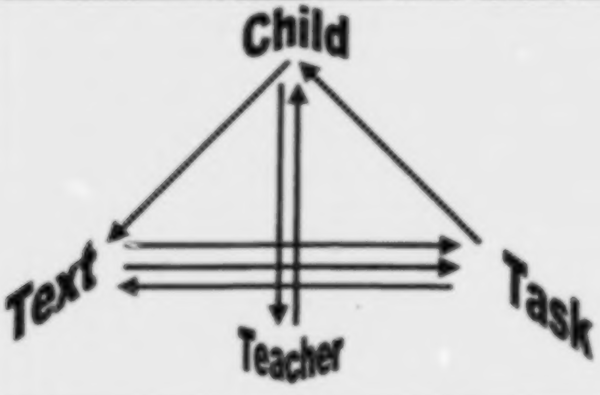
Figure 2. Factors Contributing to Teaching and Learning Success



Literacy Dictionary (Harris and Hodges, 1995) no reference to "conation" was found. Thus, the authors felt the need to introduce and connect conation to literacy within the literature. Following is a brief description of the factors of a proposed model of literacy development (see Figure 2).

A Model of Literacy Development

The literature review in this paper describes the interrelated nature of one or more of the four domains in previously developed models of learning and literacy development. However, none of the models accepted over the years has included all four domains interacting together with reader, text, task, and teacher. Extending Meeks' (1987) conceptions, the proposed model suggests that the process of thought involved in literacy acts , the cognitive domain, and its expression in class discussion and group work emerge as a social process and reading material is internalized only after it has been expressed socially. Determination and will, the conative domain, along with various aspects of the affective domain interact with those thoughts and social processes among the reader, the teacher, the text and the task. Co-creation of literacy development may occur in a recursive cycle.

This proposed interactive model illustrates successful literacy development as occurring when teachers attend to affect and conation and demonstrate the value of inquiry, sharing, and curiosity about learning within a social context. [Examples of these attributes are included in Table 1.] Indeed, Nelson (1998) has suggested that

> . . . the collaboration processes of relatively small groups of students and their teachers, discussion groups and peer response groups . . . tend to be situated in contexts that are relatively constrained as to time and place. Social factors including 'rules' about what topics are relevant, who can

Table 1. Factors Contributing to Teaching and Learning Success

Child	Teacher	Text	Task
Quality of prior knowledge. The learner's prior knowledge may be clear and factual or unclear and represent false knowledge.	***Quality of time on task.*** Teachers must develop caring relationships with children in completing the task.	***Perception of difficulty.*** Students cannot perceive the book in a negative way, as being too difficult to comprehend.	***Interest.*** Tasks must be interesting to the student.
Task-intrinsic motivation. The child's readiness to perform an activity is a goal in itself.	***Modeling the value of thought processes.*** Teachers must value thinking and discussion as tools to develop the thought processes of children.	***Aesthetics.*** Texts must be appropriate for the audience, with pleasing formats.	***Appropriateness.*** Tasks must be appropriate to the intellectual, psychological, social, and moral development of the student.
Insight. Reflective awareness comes through cooperative interchange among students.	***Fostering curiosity.*** Teachers must believe inquisitiveness and curiosity are most important in the learning process.	***Good Writing.*** Subjects must come alive through the author's use of good writing.	***Cohesive context.*** The student must perceive that the task assigned makes sense in relation to what is read.
Perception of self as a reader. Children must see themselves as generators of information, not passive receptors of knowledge.			***Perception of difficulty.*** The student cannot perceive the task in a negative way, as being too difficult to perform.
Will to succeed. Persistence and internal locus of control must be occurring.			***Will to succeed.*** Internal locus of control and a desire to be competitive with others or oneself, i.e., persistence must be operational.

> talk about them, and what can be said, influence what counts as knowledge when shared understandings are being constructed (p. 272).

In the integrative model proposed here, cognitive processes are built around a concomitant interest in, and attention to, the affective and conative domains as well as the social environment. This model should be field tested in different classroom environments, especially to assess the social and conative factors that enhance or impede learning.

Conclusion

The proposed Model of Literacy Development purports that appropriately stressing the affective, conative, and social domains along with the cognitive, requires that teachers or observers assess how the four factors of child, teacher, text, and task are operating during literacy learning. Appropriate questions would include: A) Is the teacher modeling reasoning and thinking strategies during the lesson? B) Do students have enough background knowledge of the subject? C) Is the text readable and enjoyable? and D) Is the task reasonable or too difficult? Students may have difficulty enjoying their work and may not be successful in the lesson unless the teacher pays close attention to the these four factors of teaching and learning.

Future Directions For Research

More studies are needed that challenge the notion that knowledge is only "fact based." In describing the important domains of literacy development in the classroom, conation, affect, cognition, and social environment cannot be arbitrarily separated. The following are suggested directions for future research:

1. Do conative factors impede or facilitate student attempts to construct meaning? Students need to be observed manipulating text in real reading situations, not just in ultra-controlled environments. Is conation important in these real reading environments? What factors help make students "architects of their own learning"? (Sweet and Anderson, 1993, p. 135). Can such conative factors as will and determination be manipulated as variables in constructivist studies of students in meaning-gathering modes? How are the different domains of learning such as the conative, cognitive, and affective integrated with success when students attempt to construct meaning?
2. Can will and determination be developed over time? Longitudinal studies are needed in the area of conation and reading to see whether determination, desire, and will to learn can be developed incrementally over time. The case study methodology would be appropriate

for following one or several students through a number of years to see whether certain intervention strategies introduced at specific times can improve the desire to learn. Researchers need to learn what the best practices are for improving student determination, as well as the optimum time for introducing such strategies.

3. Is there a way to ascertain the social nature of cognition? Controlled studies are needed to find out more about the social nature of reading and whether the social construct can be isolated sufficiently to find out if it helps in the engagement of learning. Studies could be conducted on grouping variables, learning through buddy systems, and ways "lonely learning" (learning in isolation) can affect learning.

Summary

The political climate of the times, with a heavy emphasis on standards and standardized testing measurements, may suggest that literacy development rests primarily within the cognitive domain. However, a variety of research studies (Berlak, 1992; Cooter, 1995; Gholar et al., 1991) have indicated that four domains, cognitive, affective, social, and conative, all contribute in important ways to literacy. As the proposed Model of Literacy Development suggests, improved literacy development may take place as these four domains are recognized, integrated and nurtured with regard to four crucial factors of the lesson, child, teacher, text, and task. Research is necessary in these important areas, especially the conative domain as related to literacy development. In particular, research is needed that focuses on the will, determination, and drive to achieve on the part of students, and why some students have this all-important drive and others do not. Such research may help define the teacher's role in the classroom as a change-agent and coach as well as instructional leader.

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INVESTING IN PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

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Abstract

To add to the growing body of knowledge regarding the use of portfolios, a study was conducted to determine the extent to which universities seek to support, understanding and use of portfolios as a means of assessing and evaluating literacy, specifically, and learning, in general. Of interest were (1) how various personnel encourage and assist preservice and inservice teachers to develop professional portfolios, (2) how instructors in individual courses use alternative and portfolio evaluation to document student learning, and (3) how instructors encourage perservice and inservice teachers to implement use of portfolios in their K- 12 classrooms. Eighty-four university respondents replied to the questionnaire developed to assess portfolio understanding and use. Results suggest continuing interest in the use of portfolios as a means to assess learning, yet the support provided at state and institutional levels is questionable. Objective evaluation of portfolios continues to be an issue, as does the actual implementation of portfolios in K-12 and university classrooms.

In the area of literacy, instruction often outpaces assessment. While our understanding of the reading comprehension process and of literacy strategies to help students comprehend the author's message and respond critically to it has changed greatly in the last 30 years, changes in assessment have been much slower to make their way into the classroom. But they have come! Sarroub and Pearson (1998) presents a view of the history of comprehension assessment that centers on movement away from multiple choice tests toward such concepts as assessing prior knowledge and using retellings. One way that teachers are taking literacy assessment a step further is through having their students keep literacy portfolios to chronicle their growth and success over time (Roe and Vukelich, 1998; Valencia, 1997).

Faculty and administrators in teacher preparation programs are beginning to mirror this reflective nature of evaluation in a number of ways. One is by having students (both graduate and undergraduate) develop a professional portfolio. In this portfolio they document who they are as teachers. An important aspect of their portfolio is a demonstration of their own literacy status. Another is by using portfolio assessment in university classrooms so that perservice education students have first-hand knowledge regarding portfolios as a means of demonstrating literacy growth and learning, not only in the reading-writing classroom but across all curricular areas. A final way is by encouraging preservice and inservice teachers to use portfolio assessment in their teaching to demonstrate their K- 12 students' literacy growth. This article focuses on these three types of portfolios and ways of encouraging the use of literacy portfolios in the classroom, reporting the results of a survey which examined the status of portfolio use among reading educators.

The Professional Teacher Portfolio

Portfolios are an avenue for continued professional growth for inservice teachers and serve as a vehicle for celebrating that growth (Wolf, 1996). The benefits are monumental for both new teachers and teachers desiring a new teaching position that involves enhancing students' literacy, for portfolios clarify to interested administrators the candidate's educational beliefs and experiences as well as the person's own level of literacy and general educational expertise (Golomb, 1996). Jacobson (1997) reports that portfolios are playing an increasing role in teacher hiring with school officials requesting them. Perhaps the most important benefit is one suggested by Rogers and Danielson (1996) who argue that teachers can use portfolio assessment much more effectively in the classroom if they have firsthand experience documenting themselves as readers and writers.

A teacher portfolio is "a collection of work produced by a teacher to highlight and demonstrate his or her knowledge and skills in teaching" (Doolittle, 1994) with a focus on reflecting on what the teacher has learned (Wilcox, 1996). A number of educators have discussed the variety of evidence these portfolios might contain. They've also suggested that portfolios can be enhanced by carefully selecting and organizing artifacts and by providing captions to describe the context of the artifact with an interpretive comment speaking to the importance of including the artifact in the portfolio (Burke,1996; Golcomb, 1996; Wolf, 1996). The candidate's own literacy is always one key focus of an inservice or preservice teacher's portfolio.

Some universities are beginning to use a comprehensive portfolio assessment plan for education majors in order to measure the progress of undergraduate preservice educators. Students may meet with faculty to review their portfolio contents at certain stages of their preparation program, and they may also meet with other education majors to evaluate peers' portfolios and provide input (Hus & Bergeron, 1998). Sometimes, a specific course may be devoted to portfolio construction and review. Through state boards of education and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, professional portfolio evaluation continues beyond the university level when considering licensure and master teacher status (Golomb, 1996; Wolf, 1996; Wolf, Lichtenstein, Bartlett, & Hartman, 1996).

Portfolios and Other Alternative Assessments in University Courses

Portfolio assessment as a means of evaluation in university courses is a growing departure from traditional practice. While a portfolio may include elements of traditional assessment (examinations and quizzes), portfolio assessment typically incorporates various alternative assessments, such as oral presentations, collaborative learning experiences via group projects and in-class activities, individual projects, research papers, and response papers. These measures assess literacy as well as content learning.

Going beyond simply compiling these artifacts, the student provides the rationale for the selection of each (perhaps according to established criteria) and summarizes personal growth and learning over the span of the course. In evaluating the portfolio, an instructor may take into consideration various factors, including evidence of student progress over time and the professional presentation of the document (McLaughlin and Vogt, 1996).

In higher education, professors are under increasing pressure to incorporate different types of teaching and to implement evaluation procedures that reflect these changes (McFadyen, 1997). Sometimes, university professors have not formally implemented the portfolio assessment process but have begun to move in this direction by incorporating authentic, performance-based assessment to more accurately document students' literacy and more reliably measure learning (McLaughlin & Vogt, 1996).

Guzzio (1996) discusses results of portfolio grading in a freshman composition course, thus obviously focusing on literacy. However, documenting cross-curricular literacy through portfolios is important, too (Lengeling, 1996), and can be seen in the research of Adams (1996), Bartley (1997), Iannozzi (1997), Petrakis (1996), and Slater (1996). Studies by Zidon (1996) and Dutt-Doner & Personett (1997) both found very positive student response to portfolio assessment in the university classroom, with students valuing what they learned about their knowledge of the content, about teaching and learning, and about themselves.

K-12 Student Growth Portfolio

In addition to preservice and inservice teachers experiencing portfolio assessment to understand themselves as learners as addressed in the preceding section, participating directly in the portfolio process encourages preservice and inservice reading/language arts teachers to implement this assessment approach in their K-12 classrooms. The types of portfolios developed in literacy education courses which model appropriate practice in the K-12 classroom are often less teacher-directed than the typical university course portfolio.

Krause (1996) and Taylor (1997) found that the effects of instruction in portfolio assessment increased students' knowledge and understanding of the process. University professors of literacy and general education courses prepare students to use portfolio assessment by asking them to create portfolios in which they document their progress, create rubrics, and develop reflective self-evaluations (Ford, 1994; Stokes, 1996; Zidon, 1996). Step-by-step instruction in creating the portfolio thus models for preservice teachers the process they might use. Ford (1995) reports on an integrated method course with a clinical field component in which the students collectively constructed the framework for their portfolios. The portfolio process provided the instructor opportunities to model effective strategies for alternative assessment and helped the students see connections between the methods course and their clinical experience. In a similar study, Wile (1994) asserts that this process in a reading methods course served as a scaffold to support students in the construction of a meaningful theoretical orientation towards literacy instruction and assessment.

Not only do preservice and inservice teachers need to personally experience the process as they develop their own portfolios, but they also need to have first-hand experiences helping children develop portfolios. When collaboration exists between the university and public school, it can serve to authenticate and enrich the portfolio learning experience for preservice teachers. After training in rubric and calibration development and the design of performance evaluation procedures, preservice teachers were guided as they established portfolio assessment in a local elementary school (Hoag, 1995). In a California study, Knudsen and Wiley (1997) report collaboration between university faculty and schoolteachers as they provided experiences for preservice teachers in aligning national literacy standards with the curriculum in portfolio assessment. Students were able to collaborate with each other and the instructor to deepen their understanding of the portfolio process. In a developmental reading course (Koals, 1994), preservice teachers kept portfolios of their tutoring sessions with children throughout the semester. Periodically they discussed the tutee's progress with the professor, then worked in collaboration with a classmate to evaluate a tutee's portfolio. In this way they were able to see their students' progress as evidenced in these growth portfolios.

Purpose of the Study

The overarching purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which universities encouraged and supported professors' and students' involvement with portfolio development and assessment and the extent that professors were involved in portfolio assessment without university encouragement. Three directions for portfolio assessment were considered:

1. professional portfolios: state/university/departmental/individual faculty member's perspectives regarding the development of professional portfolios,
2. portfolio assessment for university students in individual courses,
3. application of portfolio assessment in K-12 classrooms: focus on preservice and inservice teachers' developing student portfolios of learning.

The following were key research questions:

1. What are the perceived state and school district perspectives and perceived university/college/departmental perspectives of individual respondents regarding the following:
    - the extent to which developing professional portfolios is required or encouraged, and
    - the extent to which the development of professional portfolios is *actively* encouraged via providing assistance?
2. To what degree are university professors engaging in the following:
    - assessing their own university students using portfolios,
    - extensively using alternative assessment, an important component of portfolio assessment, in their own courses (even if they did not actually have students develop growth portfolios), and
    - using holistic or analytic rubrics to assess student work?
3. To what extent do departments, generally, and university professors, specifically, do the following:
    - encourage students to use portfolio assessment in their present or future K-12 classrooms,
    - teach students to develop analytic rubrics for use with K-12 students,
    - provide models of K-12 student portfolios, and
    - include specific assignments focusing on the "how to" of K-12 portfolio assessment?

Method

Materials

A three-part questionnaire was developed (see Appendix). The first part of the questionnaire focused on the extent to which state departments of education, universities, and individual professors encouraged and assisted undergraduate and graduate students to develop professional portfolios. The second part of the questionnaire focused on how university professors used alternative assessment and assessed student work from a portfolio perspective. This included different methods for demonstrating knowledge and competency, as well as the concept of student choice. The third part of the questionnaire focused on the perceived importance of the student growth portfolio for K- 12 students and how professors assisted preservice and inservice teachers to become knowledgeable about this manner of assessment and evaluation.

Procedure

Once the questionnaire was prepared, the research team mailed duplicate copies to 304 members of a national professional literacy association. In a cover letter, members were asked to complete one copy of the questionnaire themselves and invite a colleague or other professional with an interest in alternative assessment to complete the second copy. It was requested that completed questionnaires be returned to a member of the research team for analysis.

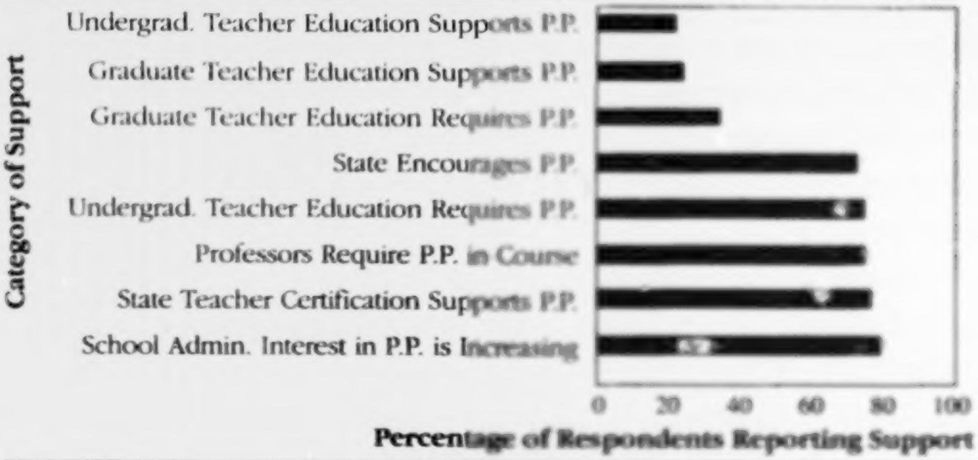
Results

Eighty-four participants from twenty-six states submitted completed questionnaires for a fourteen percent return rate. Fifty-six of the respondents were members of a national professional literacy association. The respondents had an average of ten years of K-12 teaching experience and fourteen years of instruction within higher education. The extensive nature of the survey instrument generated a large volume of data. The present analysis discusses highlights from the results

Professional Teacher Portfolios

The percentage of respondents reporting support for professional portfolios by category of support is presented in Figure 1. Almost 70% of those responding reported that their states were involved in projects to encourage teachers to develop professional portfolios, and a greater percentage, 75%, reported their states were supportive of universities encouraging teachers to develop professional portfolios. Similarly, about 3/4 of the respondents reported that the development of a professional portfolio was a university, college, or departmental requirement for undergraduate students, and 1/3

Figure 1. Percentage of Respondents Reporting Support for Professional Portfolio (P.P.) by Category of Support



reported this as a requirement for graduate students. For both undergraduate and graduate students, about 1/4 of the respondents reported that the university, college, or department was at least supportive.

The most frequently described assistance provided to undergraduate students to help them develop professional portfolios included seminar topics, reported by 52% of the respondents, written directions, cited by 49% of the survey respondents, and the availability of sample portfolios for students to view, cited by 36% of the respondents. For graduate students, support included written directions (27%), the availability of sample professional portfolios for students to view (24%), and a seminar topic (21%). Over 40% of the respondents reported that graduate students did not receive any level of assistance. Less common levels of support for both undergraduate and graduate students were a required (or elective) course or a workshop in the development of professional portfolios.

Responses were more positive when those participating in the survey referred to courses they specifically taught rather than focusing on a more general university or departmental perspective. Explaining to students via discussion and handouts HOW to develop a professional portfolio, frequently placing the requirements for their courses within a professional portfolio framework, or having a professional portfolio as one of the course requirements was cited by almost 3/4 of the respondents. Interestingly, 26% of the respondents had actually taught a course in which a primary goal was to help inservice or preservice teachers develop a professional portfolio. Typically, respondents thought the portfolios should be graded if they were developed within the context of a course.

Development of a professional portfolio was perceived as valuable in

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two ways. First, respondents saw an increasing interest on the part of school administrators in having those interviewing for teaching positions share their professional portfolio as part of the interview process (77%). Second, they believed that teachers who develop professional portfolios will be more likely to use portfolio assessment in their classroom if they have developed their own professional portfolios (88%).

Of the perceived concerns related to the development of professional portfolios, concern regarding (1) logistics and the personnel needed to provide the information or implement the plan and (2) objective evaluation were rated as important by 45% and 41% of the respondents, respectively. Respondents were less concerned about (1) state department politics as related to teachers' professional development and evaluation and (2) a negative response (lack of interest in viewing the portfolios) on the part of principals and other hiring personnel.

Portfolios and Other Alternative Assessments in University Courses

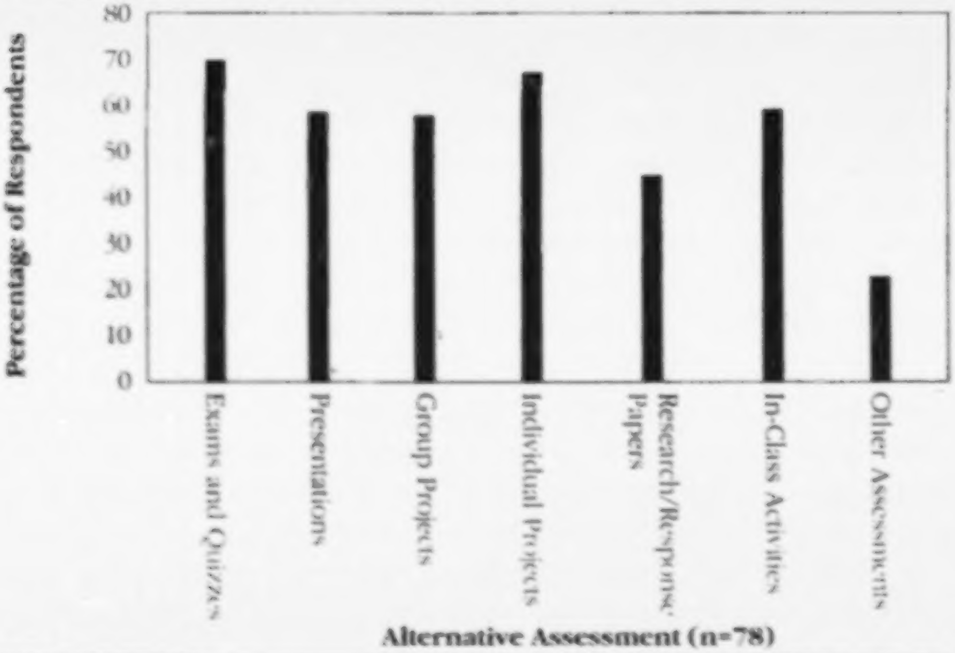
University and department expectation levels regarding an instructor's use of portfolio assessment varied. Seven percent of the survey participants reported forceful level expectations, 59% described supportive level expectations, and 34% cited departmental indifference (with four percent not responding).

Ninety percent of the respondents confirmed use of alternative assessment, with or without use of portfolio assessment. An additional 5% reported using alternative assessment to a limited extent. Most of the respondents (74%, n=74) reported using portfolios in a manner much like the definition of portfolio assessment presented in this study. Figure 2 describes the level of use of several alternative assessments. Individual projects, in-class activities, presentations, and group projects were all cited by at least 60% of the respondents; however, quizzes and exams were highest-ranking (70%).

Respondents reported the use of different rubric strategies. Eighty-six percent of the respondents reported using published rubrics for grading. Of those reporting use of rubrics, 86% provide rubrics to the students before the assignment is turned in and 28% encourage student input into the development of the rubric. Of those reporting using rubrics, almost 60% reported using descriptive rubrics (point allocation for various sections), 28% reported using analytic rubrics, and 23% reported using holistic rubrics.

The study also examined student choice. In one third of this study's cases (n=64), students have extensive choice to select items for inclusion in their portfolios, while 59% of the time they had a moderate level of choice. Only 8% of the time did they have little input.

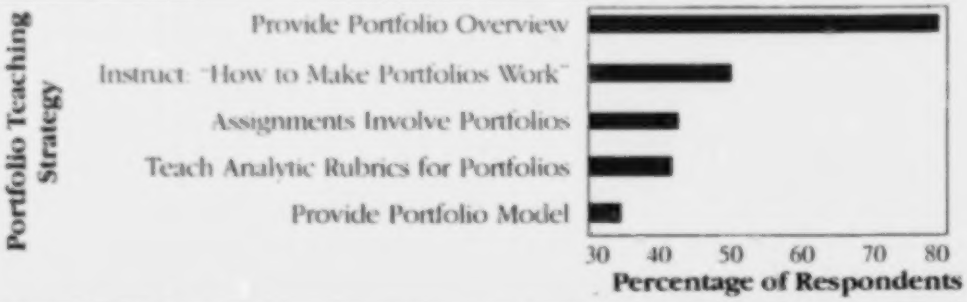
Figure 2. Percent of Respondents Reporting Use of Alternative Assessments



K-12 Student Growth Portfolios

In reporting the results of the survey, Figure 3 highlights the responses in four areas of this section of the questionnaire. Responses reflected the following perceptions about departmental practice. Eighty-one percent of the survey participants (n=74) stated that learning about portfolio assessment is an important aspect of one or more undergraduate courses taught in their department. However, learning about portfolio assessment for literacy was described as a major component of undergraduate reading courses in only

Figure 3. Percentage of Respondents Teaching K-12 Portfolio Assessment by Strategy



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47% of the completed questionnaires (n=70). The extent to which portfolio assessment was addressed in various courses but not a key component in any one course found support from 61% of the recipients while 39% disagreed. As respondents reflected on their own practice in teaching, results revealed some ambivalence. Seventy-eight percent, n=76, of the respondents claimed to provide students with an overview of developing a growth portfolio; only 22% claimed not to do so. However, only half believed they helped students understand how to make portfolio assessment work in their classrooms, and even fewer respondents, 35% provided various models of student growth portfolios in their courses. Similarly, only 42% taught students how to develop analytic rubrics to assess portfolio entries; this contrasts with 58% who admitted to providing limited or no instruction in such assessment tools. A greater number of respondents, 55%, stated that they included a course assignment that focused on an aspect of portfolio assessment (whether it asked students to consider steps in portfolio assessment, or to develop a rubric for a course project). Twenty-three percent had done so "minimally," while 22% had not incorporated this practice in course work.

The final item in this section of the survey addressed participants' perceptions of the interest in portfolio assessment among public school personnel, administrators, teachers, and students. Of the 73 responses, 44% detected a growing interest, 21% believed interest was stable, and only 14% believed interest to be waning. An additional 22% answered that portfolio assessment was not an issue in their experience.

Discussion and Implications

Professional Teacher Portfolios

Among those responding, perceived support for the development of professional portfolios at the state and university level was relatively strong. Respondents were less sure about state projects involving professional portfolios, as determined by a lower response rate for this question. Respondents did feel that professional portfolio development fulfilled an important need at the district level. Thus, support was found for Golomb's (1996) and Jacobson's (1997) stated benefit of using the professional portfolio to clarify one's beliefs and abilities to interested administrators. Further support for professional portfolios fulfilling an important need at the district level was provided by data showing that of the four concerns regarding the development of professional portfolios, principals not being interested in viewing them was viewed as least significant. Additionally, support was found for the benefit suggested by Rogers and Danielson (1996) who argued that the first- hand experience of documenting themselves as readers and writers would lead to teachers using portfolio assessment in the classroom.

An inconsistency appears between the perceived relatively strong endorsement by universities, colleges, and departments and the actual level of assistance provided to both preservice and inservice teachers. Although the top three types of support were the same for both undergraduate and graduate students, a significant number of graduate students received no assistance at all. Additionally, the two most important kinds of assistance provided to both undergraduate and graduate students (seminar topics and written directions) placed the learner in a very passive role. Response to the survey did not provide information regarding whether being given the directions was accompanied by time to discuss and ask questions or whether the students were on their own to understand and use the directions. Similarly, whether the seminar topic was a 30 minute talk by someone versed in the development of portfolios or a longer and more interactive discussion was not ascertained. However, the possibility of minimal assistance can be inferred. If both preservice and inservice teachers are going to feel comfortable with developing portfolios, they need to participate in more interactive learning experiences.

Respondent interest in professional portfolios was high, as determined by discussion and course structure. Interestingly, although 26% of the respondents indicated they had taught a course in which professional portfolio development was a primary goal, the university providing a required or elective course to help preservice and inservice teachers develop portfolios was not cited with this high a percentage. Some of the respondents who had taught such courses had perhaps taught them outside their present university setting.

Although viewing sample portfolios was the third most common method of providing assistance to undergraduates and ranked second for graduate students, the frequency was less than 30% for graduate students and only slightly higher for undergraduates. Both undergraduate and graduate students need to view model portfolios as well as discuss how sample portfolios that are less effective might be improved. Via a workshop or course format, even if only minimum credit is attached to it, they need to participate in a step-by-step procedure that incorporates time to develop artifacts and formatively assess what they have developed. Not unexpected was the high level of concern with the logistics or personnel needed to provide the information or implement the plan, with only 16% rating this as not an important concern.

Portfolios and Other Alternative Assessments in University Course

Higher education departments express a significant but not strong commitment to using portfolio assessment to evaluate college students. An explanation might be that college student class portfolios are viewed as one of many possible assessment strategies. Professors exercise a variety of alternative assessments, with or without the specific use of portfolios. Within the university classroom, there is relatively even use of several alternative assessments; however, the use of academic exams is slightly more popular than the use of any one alternative assessment. Rubrics are used frequently in higher education courses as part of the assessment process. Because college students typically preview the rubric and sometimes help develop the rubric, it appears that for instructors engaging in alternative assessment, rubrics are a popular strategy for communicating instructor expectations. The descriptive rubric was the favored rubric format among professors. The more difficult to design analytic rubric and the more general holistic rubric were second and third choices.

Student choice is viewed as an important part of the assessment picture. Professors were equally likely to provide extensive choice regarding which assignments to complete (or ways to alter directions) and to encourage input regarding design of the rubric. They were much more likely to provide moderate choice regarding assignments to complete.

K-12 Student Growth Portfolios

Those responding perceived a high level of interest within universities and a growing interest in public schools. Preservice and inservice teachers frequently received instruction about K- 12 student portfolios in their literacy education courses, most often by means of an overview presentation. The majority of respondents featured portfolio assessment as a key course component. Although respondents who taught the development of growth portfolios in their courses exceeded the number who did not, the actual level of assistance was reportedly limited in three response items (Questions 28, 29, and 30). While Krause (1996), Taylor (1997), and Wile (1994) had found that direct instruction and practice in this form of portfolio increased students' knowledge, such practice might not be widespread. Only one-half of university courses appear committed to instruction on how to effectively integrate portfolios into the K-12 classroom. It appears that university students probably gain some knowledge of the growth portfolio as they complete course assignments that have such a focus. Over three-quarters of the respondents claimed to require portfolio-related projects in their courses.

Limitations

As with any pilot study, important limitations must be considered. First, though respondents were very positive, the low response rate is a concern. This could be attributable to the length of the questionnaire, with those not returning the questionnaire being equally divided between those who might have responded positively and negatively. It is also likely that those who are ambivalent about portfolio assessment would choose not to respond. It is also important to note that many of the duplicate copies may not have been distributed; thus, possible respondents were not given the opportunity to complete the questionnaire. Thus, the conclusions that can be drawn from the results are cautionary.

Since those completing the survey were asked to respond regarding their perceptions of state and university support, conclusions that can be drawn from the data depend on the accuracy of the respondents' perceptions. Despite attempts to clarify definitions used and to provide a variety of choices for issues to represent differing perspectives, the problem of different interpretations and of forced-choice responses are additional limitations.

Although 26 states were represented, some states (and some universities within these states) may have been over-represented.

Directions for Further Research

The overall high level of interest in portfolios, the trend of growing interest in portfolio assessment, and the many related research questions gleaned from this study suggest that future research into a number of specific areas is warranted. To gain more accurate information regarding the value of professional portfolios, state departments of teacher certification, university administrators charged with preservice education of teachers, and principals and other hiring personnel at the local level should be surveyed. Thus, conclusions could be drawn from more factual information rather than from perceptions of faculty and other university personnel. Data should be gathered from those who have developed professional portfolios regarding how they perceive the value of the assistance they received in developing their portfolio as well as ways they have used their portfolios and how others have responded to them. The four areas of concern voiced by a significant number of the respondents are another topic for further investigation. These concerns may help explain the previously described inconsistency between strong endorsement of professional portfolios and only moderate levels of organized assistance for students.

Future research regarding portfolio use in university courses might be directed at the basis for depending on a variety of alternative assessments and why there is comparatively even use of so many assessment approaches. The use of a variety of rubrics and many alternative assessments invites future research regarding the relationships between using alternative assessments and employing different rubrics.

Much is unclear as to how university instructors scaffold their students' learning about K-12 growth portfolios. What constitutes "limited" instruction? What is the nature or amount of help considered "somewhat"? A further direction for future research is suggested by Knudsen and Wiley's (1997) report. This California study explored the collaboration between university faculty and schoolteachers and its positive impact on preservice teachers experience. How prevalent is such practice?

Thus the perception of growing interest in portfolios in the K-12 classroom poses a challenge for universities dedicated to teacher education. While we recognize that this form of assessment is still in its infancy, how willingly schools are influenced to adopt it is in direct relation to how effectively practicing teachers and preservice teachers are prepared to make it work. On this issue, many questions remain.

This pilot study provided groundwork for portfolio research in a number of areas but did not provide for in-depth explanation on a variety of the issues addressed. A survey with a different population, and one that would result in more response data, would strengthen these initial findings.

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Appendix. The Questionnaire

Part I: Professional Portfolios

Professional Portfolios: State Perspective

1. My state is involved in projects that encourage teachers to develop professional portfolios. ☐ Yes ☐ No

2. The process of teacher certification in my state is supportive of universities encouraging professional portfolios for teachers. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Professional Portfolios: University/Departmental Perspective

Mark as many answers as are applicable

3. Undergraduate teacher education majors develop a professional portfolio
   a. as university or college or education requirement.
   b. as a departmental requirement. Name of department ________________
   c. as a personal decision with university or college encouragement to do so.
   d. as a personal decision with department encouragement to do so. Name of department ____________
   e. only as a personal, without formal encouragement by the university, college, or department.
   f. I don't know whether the university, college, or department supports the development of professional portfolios or not.

4. Graduate students in teacher education develop a professional portfolio
   a. as a college of education requirement, a culminating experience for degree completion.
   b. as a departmental requirement, a culminating experience for degree completion. Name of department ___________________
   c. as a personal decision with university or college encouragement to do so.
   d. as a personal decision with department encouragement to do so. Name of department ________________
   e. only as a personal, without formal encouragement by the university, college, or department.
   f. I don't know whether the university, college, or department supports the development of professional portfolios or not.

5. Which of the following kinds of support are given to undergraduate students to help them develop their portfolios?
   a. a required course (perhaps for as little as .5 of a quarter or semester hour)
   b. an elective course (perhaps for as little as .5 of a quarter or semester course)
   c. a workshop (perhaps for as little as 1/4 day
   d. a seminar topic (perhaps as part of a required course or as a meeting back on campus while student teaching)
   e. written directions provided for effective portfolio development
   f. availability of sample professional portfolios for students to view
   g. No generally organized assistance is provided. (Possibly individual faculty members provide assistance through courses they teach or through individual advising.)

6. Which of the following kinds of support are given to graduate students to help them develop their portfolios?
   - a. a required course (perhaps for as little as .5 of a quarter or semester hour)
   - b. an elective course (perhaps for as little as .5 of a quarter or semester course)
   - c. a workshop (perhaps for as little 1/4 day)
   - d. a seminar topic (perhaps as part of a required course)
   - e. writen directions for effective portfolio development
   - f. availability of sample professional portfolios for students to view
   - g. No generally organized assistance is provided. (Possibly individual faculty members provide assistance through courses they teach or through individual advising).

7. Rate each of the following as perceived concerns with requiring or encouraging the development of professional portfolios:

   I (important); SI (somewhat important); NI (not important)

   - a. Concern about the politics involved with state departments of education as they are related to teachers' professional development and evaluation I SI NI
   - b. Concern about objective evaluation I SI NI
   - c. Concern that principals and other hiring personnel don't expect nor particularly want to see them I SI NI
   - d. Concerns related to the logistics or personnel needed to provide the inforamtion or implement the plan I SI NI

Professional Portfolios: Individual Repondent Perspective

8. I have taught a course in which the primary goal was to help inservice or preservice teachers develop a professonal portfolio.

9. I frequently place requirements for my course within the framework of developing a professional portfolio or have consideration of a professional portfolio as a course component.

10. I explain to students (discussion, handouts) HOW to develop a professional portfolio.

11. I believe that professional portfolios should be graded if they are developed within the context of a course.

12. I see increasing interest on the part of school administrators in having those interviewing for teaching positions share their professional portfolio as part of the interview process.

13. I believe that preservice and inservice teachers who develop professional portfolios will be more likely to use portfolios within their classrooms as one means of evaluating student growth.

Part II: Portfolios and Other Alternative Assessments in University Courses

14. My department's expectation regarding an instructor's use of portfolio assessment is: ☐ Forceful ☐ Supportive ☐ Indifferent

15. I assess students via the use of portfolios in a manner much like the definition of portfolio assessment provided with this questionnaire. ☐ Yes ☐ No

16. I allow students choice regarding what items to include in their portfolio. ☐ Extensive ☐ Moderate ☐ Little

17. I evaluate the portfolios according to an established rubric. ☐ Yes ☐ No
    If NO, describe the evaluation method:

18. I do portfolio assessment in my university courses but not according to the definition presented in this questionnaire. ☐ Yes ☐ No
    Describe:

19. Alternative assessment (with or without use of portfolio assessment): I offer a variety of opportunities for students to demonstrate knowledge and competencies in my course (individual projects, group projects, class presentations, research/response papers, in-class activities in addition to examinations/quizzes, etc.)—items that would be appropriate for includsion in a portfolio. ☐ Yes ☐ Limited Number ☐ No

20. Alternative assessment (with or without use of portfolio assessment) Given the variety of courses that I teach, I typically allocate these percentages for the following types of assessment:
    a. Examinations and quizzes a. __________
    b. Presentations b. __________
    c. Group Projects c. __________
    d. Individual Projects d. __________
    e. Research/Response Papers e. __________
    f. In-Class Activities f. __________
    g. Other ____________________ g. __________

21. Alternative assessment (with or without use of portfolio assessment): I offer students in my courses choice regarding which assignments to complete or possible directions for the assignments. ☐ Yes ☐ Limited Choice ☐ No

22. Alternative assessment (with or without use of portfolio assessment): I grade course assignments according to a published rubric. (Choose just one answer.)
    a. Yes, with the students having input into the development of the rubric.
    b. Yes, and I provide the rubric to students prior to the assignment being turned in.
    c. Yes, although the students do not see it until their assignments are returned.
    d. I do not use rubrics in my grading.

23. Alternative assessment (with or without use of portfolio assessment): The rubrics I use are:
    a. Analytic, with specific levels clearly defined.
    b. Holistic, with general descriptions for total grades.
    c. Based on a description of what is to be completed with point allocations for various sections of the activity.
    d. I do not use rubrics in my grading.

Part III: K-12 Student Growth Portfolios

Student Growth Portfolios in the K-12 Context: Departmental Perspective

24. Learning about portfolio assessment is an important aspect of one or more undergraduate courses taught in my department. ☐ Yes ☐ No
25. Learning about portfolio assessment for literacy is a component of an undergraduate corrective reading course, reading assessment course, or other literacy course. ☐ Yes ☐ No
26. Portfolio assessment may be addressed in various courses but is not a key component in any one course. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Individual Repondent: Portfolio Assessment in the K-12 Context

27. I provide students in one or more of my courses with an overview of how to have students in their classrooms develop growth portfolios. ☐ Yes ☐ No
28. I help students understand how to make portfolio assessment work in their classrooms. ☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No
29. I provide models to my students of student growth portfolios. ☐ Yes ☐ Limited ☐ No
30. I teach my students how to develop analytic rubrics that can be used to assess various student products or productions that might be included in the student's growth portfolio. ☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No
31. I have an assignment in one or more of the classes that I teach that focuses on some aspect of portfolio assessment (e.g., having students consider how they might begin to implement portfolio assessment within their classrooms, having students develop rubrics for grading projects that would be appropriate to include in a growth portfolio, etc.) ☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No
32. In informal contacts with school administrators, teachers, and students applying for teaching positions, I detect the following type of K-12 interest in development of student growth portfolios: ☐ Growing ☐ Stable ☐ Waning ☐ Not an issue

Concluding Comment

33. My interest in portofolios and portfolio assessment can best be described with the following pair of terms: ☐ Low/Growing ☐ Low/Stable ☐ High/Stable ☐ High/Growing

Respondent Information:

1. Name of State ______________________________
2. Name of University ______________________________
3. University Position ______________________________
4. Name of Department/Office ______________________________
5. Number of Years of Respondent's K-12 Teaching Experience: ______________
6. Number of Years Teaching at the University Level ______________
7. Member of the College Reading Association ☐ Yes ☐ No
8. Name (optional) ______________________________

CONSTRUCTING THE –ISMS OF MAKING MEANING

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Abstract

The authors of this paper review the various and shifting perspectives of constructivism and constructionism currently advanced in literacy education. Confusion about these terms stems from inconsistent usage at different levels of the word construct. The authors endeavor to examine and to explore an analysis emphasizing the particularly influential nature of these theories as they relate to generative, organizational, and selective aspects of literacy.

In response to inconsistency in literacy education literature over the usage and meaning of the terms constructivism and constructionism, this paper reviews theoretical work presented in diverse disciplines specifying parallels in research that emphasize the influential nature of these theories as they relate to generative, organizational, and selective aspects of human perception, understanding, and memory. As Spivey (1997) has indicated:

> No piece of writing is discrete, unconnected from other texts, because writers draw from their own experiences with other writers' texts when they write their own, using knowledge they have built of discourse conventions and options, of topic and domain, of contrasting views, and so on. (p.146)

In an effort to abate the misunderstanding and vacillation connected with appurtenant use of the terms, recent publications have presented constructivism and constructionism in a variety of contexts as they relate to literacy and reading. Nevertheless, many educators still find it risky business to raise questions as to the consequence of these variations. To begin with a crude distinction, there is much support for defining *constructivism* as a set of *psychological* theories of knowledge, while understanding *constructionism* as a set of *sociological* theories of knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 1995; Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 1985). Were it only that simple!

In this paper we shall review the terms constructivism and constructonism in three sections. First, we review the various uses of the term constructivism, examining cognitive constructivism, social constructivism, and radical constructivism. We then follow with a review of the history and uses of the term constructionism in sociology and social psycology. We then briefly review what these various meanings may imply for literacy education research.

Constructivism

What is constructivism? What does it uniquely say that is fresh and relevant? Constructivism has roots in philosophy, psychology, sociology, and education. The core ideas resonate in the 'verum-factum' principle of the Italian rhetorician Vico (1968) who in 1725 theorized that humans are capable only of understanding what they have themselves constructed.

While it is important for contemporary educators to understand constructivism, it is equally important to understand the implications this view of learning has for teaching and professional development of teachers. Its central ideas are that human learning is constructed and that learners build new knowledge upon the foundation of previous learning. This view of learning contrasts with one in which learning is the passive transmission of information from one individual to another, a view in which reception, not construction, is key.

A big picture of the fundamental idea of constructed knowledge might look something like this: Learners construct new understandings using what they already know. There is no Lockian tabula rasa upon which new knowledge is etched. Learners confront their understanding in light of what they encounter in the new learning situation. If what they encounter is inconsistent with their current understanding, their understanding can change to accommodate new experience. Learners apply current understandings, note relevant elements in new learning experiences, judge the consistency of prior and emerging knowledge, and based on that judgment are able to modify that knowledge.

Teaching is not to be viewed as the transmission of knowledge from the enlightened to the empty-headed. If students must apply their current understandings in new situations in order to build new knowledge, then teachers ought to bring students' current understandings to the forefront and ensure that learning experiences incorporate problems that are consequential to students.

Indeed a focus on student-centered learning may well be the most meaningful contribution of constructivism. For example, certain guidelines suggested for teachers by Yager (1991) include:

1. Seek out and use student questions and ideas to guide lessons and instructional units.
2. Accept and encourage student initiation of ideas.
3. Promote student leadership, collaboration, location of information, and taking actions as a result of the learning process.
4. Use student thinking, experiences and interests to drive lessons.
5. Encourage the use of alternative sources for information both from written materials and experts.
6. Encourage students to suggest causes for events and situations and encourage them to predict consequences.
7. Seek out student ideas before presenting teacher ideas or before studying ideas from textbooks or other sources.
8. Encourage students to challenge each other's conceptualizations.
9. Encourage adequate time for reflection and analysis.
10. Encourage self-analysis, collection of real evidence to support ideas, and reformulation of ideas in light of new knowledge.
11. Use student identification of problems with local interest and impact as organizers for the course.
12. Use local resources as original sources of information that can be used in problem resolution.
13. Involve students in seeking information that can be applied in solving real-life problems.
14. Extend learning beyond the class period, classroom, and the school.

Instructional designers and evaluators must also consider the context in which constructivist learning takes place. Jonassen (1994) offers a blueprint consisting of eight differentiating characteristics for teachers' practice. Constructivist learning environments should:

1. provide multiple representations of reality that avoid oversimplification and represent the complexity of the real world
2. emphasize knowledge construction instead of knowledge reproduction
3. emphasize authentic tasks in a meaningful context rather than abstract instruction out of context
4. provide real-world settings or case-based learning instead of predetermined sequences of instruction
5. encourage thoughtful reflection on experience
6. enable context and content dependent knowledge construction

7. support collaborative construction of knowledge through social negotiation, not competition among learners for recognition

Constructivist teaching offers a robust departure from traditional objectivist classroom stratagems and suggests the potential to enhance the sorts of cognitive outcomes that schools have been ineffective at producing, such as problem-solving, critical analysis, and higher order thinking (Talbert, McLaughlin, & Rowan, 1993). For example, learners reformulate existing structures only if new information or experiences are connected to knowledge already in memory. Learners examine their understanding in light of what they encounter in the new learning situation.

Cognitive constructivism is based on the work of Piaget (1954) who claimed that knowledge structures built at particular levels of development influence how people construe their reality. Concepts, such as space, time, and causality are independent and relative to the structure through which the person sees the world at that moment in life. Piaget's theory of cognitive development proposes that humans cannot be given information that they immediately understand and use. Instead, humans must construct their own knowledge through experience, which enables them to create mental models in their heads. These schemata are changed, enlarged, and made more sophisticated through two complimentary processes, assimilation and accommodation.

Vygotsky (1986) is most often associated with social constructivist theory that emphasizes influences of cultural and social contexts in learning and supports a discovery model of learning. The interaction between teacher and student is seen as necessary from a social view of learning. This model places the teacher in an active role while the students' mental abilities develop naturally through various paths of discovery.

According to Vygotsky's theory, problem-solving skills or tasks can be placed into three categories: (a) those performed independently by the student; (b) those that cannot be performed even with help; and (c) those that fall between the two extremes. Social environments in which learners can support, discuss and work cooperatively facilitate the development of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). From the social constructivist view, the ZPD is where new learning can occur through a learner's collaboration with a more knowledgeable person.

Social constructivists also stress language as fundamental to thinking, problem- solving, and learning (Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992; Wertsch, 1985). This perspective assumes that language is used to negotiate meaning. Classroom talk, as an example, is critical to understanding literacy learning (Florio-Ruane, 1991; Goldenberg, 1992/1993). Likewise, with regards to language in the classroom, Marshall, Smagorinsky, and Smith (1995) cite the use of interaction analysis through numerous studies in a variety of instructional settings (Amidon & Flanders, 1963; Barnes, 1969; Bellack, Kleibard, Hyman, & Smaith, 1966; Cazsden, 1988; Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975).

In contrast, radical constructivism (von Glaserfeld, 1984) is an unconventional approach to the problem of knowledge and knowing. It begins with the assumption that knowledge, no matter how defined, is in the heads of persons, and that the thinking subject has no alternative but to construct what he/she knows on the basis of his/her own experience. What we make of experience can be sorted into things, self, others, and so forth. All kinds of experience are essentially subjective, and though we may find reasons to believe that one's experience may not be unlike those of others, there is no way of knowing this for certain.

Radical constructivism jettisons the assumption of knowledge as exclusively the product of social processes of communication and negotiation. It claims that these positions are restrictive. Von Glasersfeld (1995) says knowledge is not passively received either through the senses or by way of communication, but is actively built up by the individual. The function of cognition is adaptive and serves the individual's organization of the experiential world, not the discovery of an objective ontological reality.

Inasmuch as constructivism rejects any direct verification of knowledge by comparing the constructed model with the outside world, a most worthwhile issue is how the individual can choose between different constructions to select the correct one. Without such a selection criterion, constructivism would lapse into absolute relativism. The two most often used criteria are coherence (agreement between the different cognitive patterns within an individual's brain) and consensus (agreement between the different cognitive patterns of different individuals). For a more detailed review of constructivism in education, see Phillips (2000).

Constructionism

In accordance with the aforementioned distinction between constructionism and constructivism, the application of a construction metaphor to describe the social processes which mediate an *individual's* psychological construction of meaning is best termed social constructivism. Social constructionism, by contrast, would be applied to the study of how knowledge is constructed and shared by and for members of a community as understood within a sociological frame of analysis. The two terms are often confused and it is common for scholars to believe that one is a subset of the other, albeit this is rarely the way the term is used by those who identify themselves as constructionists.

Although the origins of social constructionism are clearly sociological in

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nature, the term and many of the ideas behind it have been borrowed into numerous other fields, most notably social psychology where a much finer line exists between social constructivism and social constructionism. We would still distinguish those social psychologists concerned with the development of individual selves within a social context as being *constructivist* (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978), while terming those concerned with the way social processes and practices mediate selves and communities as constructionist (Gergen, 1973). While the social constructionists Berger and Luckmann (1966), like Vygotsky, describe a dialectical relationship between the individual and society, the psychological processes involved in appropriation, modification, and externalization are deemed beyond the purview of a sociology of knowledge.

Readers should beware, however, that many other fields give their own special spin to the term and there is a distinction to be made between strong or extreme social constructionism, and weak or mild constructionism (Burningham & Cooper, 1999). The commonly cited watershed works in contemporary constructionism are Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) and Berger and Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). Both of these works derive from *the sociology of knowledge*, which dates to the 1920s and has roots in 19th century continental philosophy (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The central focus of the discipline concerns how ideas and facticities are constructed by communities.

In *The Structure of Scientific Knowledge*, Kuhn traces the manner in which all scientific knowledge is generated so as to be coherent within a meta-theoretical framework or paradigm. As a result of scientific investigation conducted within such a paradigm, facts that "fit" or are easily integrated into the paradigm are those most likely to get "discovered." Occasionally, however, facts that do not fit accrue, and should sufficient critical mass of these outliers develop, a paradigm shift changes the meta-theoretical gestalt. Often, as a result, old facts and theories have to be discarded so that new facts and theories can be incorporated. Largely, then, "facts" are what can be accommodated easily into a scientific community's discourse, rather than merely objective aspects of the world. In this sense, what counts as fact is a matter of disciplinary agreement.

Berger and Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* presented a dialectical theory of how individual identity and social practices develop interactively. Humans are born into a world already present which includes a nest of social practices, particularly language. The individual appropriates and internalizes these, thereby defining a subjective location of self. However, language allows subjective experiences to be externalized, or objectified, and shared with other members of a community. Language's capacity for externalization allows the transcendence of visceral here-and-now experiences across spatial, temporal, and conceptual dimensions of experience, and it is this which gives thought and subjectivity its reflexive nature.

These and similar works in the 1960s laid the ground work for what has come to be known as social constructionism. It was borrowed into social psychology beginning in the 1970s, where its most notorious champion has been Kenneth Gergen (1973, 1985, 1987, 1998a, 1998b). As if the idea of a psychological theory concerned with processes external to the head was not radical enough, this new psychological social constructionism also incorporated radical political concerns, and relied heavily on avant-garde literary theory and poststructural linguistic philosophy to explicate the central importance of discourse in the construction of personhood (Gergen, 1998b; Gergen & Davis, 1985). Some of the earliest work concerned the social construction of gender, feminist philosophy and has contributed much to the field (Burr, 1995, 1998; Gergen, 1998b).

Gergen (1985) has identified several defining attributes of social constructionism. First, according to a social constructionist framework, understanding of the world is not derived by observation but by linguistic, cultural, and historical contingencies. That is to say, "The degree to which a given form of understanding prevails . . . is not fundamentally dependent on the empirical validity of the perspective in question, but on the vicissitudes of social processes (e.g., communication, negotiation, conflict, rhetoric)" (p. 268). Moreover, "understanding is not automatically driven by the forces of nature, but is the result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationship" (p. 267). In other words, negotiated understandings are chiefly a form of social action. To sum up, Gergen's social constructionist psychology is Idealist, intertextualist, relativist, and ultimately, some might argue, solipsistic.

Derridian deconstruction theory, Marxist and Frankfurt school critical theory, and selective reinscriptions of work by Wittgenstein, Quine, Foucault and Rorty (as well as Kuhn, and Berger and Luckmann) often led to the incorporation of totalizing critiques in social constructionist literature (Gergen, 1998b). Determination of ontological verities was dismissed as impossible and empirical work as theoretically unjustified. Instead, knowledge was seen as being bound up in webs of discursive intertextuality and meaning was always in the play of difference and deferral (Derrida, 1976). Reality, by this account, was only ever a linguistic construct, and since communities of discursive practice constructed it, it could be reconstructed by those communities to better, more just, or more satisfying ends. The liberatory promise of such a theory seemed boundless to its adherents (Burr, 1998).

Unfortunately, by the 1990s, tensions within constructionism began to arise. The political activist camp within social constructionism became particularly vexed with the unbounded relativism of the literary-rhetorical camp, and the way this undetermined any capacity for grounded moral values or political commitments. Meanwhile, the social research camp, equally uneasy over where the line should be drawn in regard to the residually real, was gradually leaning away from radical politics and toward academic scholarship that could more comfortably accommodate (and be accommodated by) the assumptions of liberal democracy. Critical constructionists claimed that politics for many social constructionists had devolved to matters of promotion and tenure. For an example of the perspectives and arguments in this feisty dialogue, see Velody, Williams and Parker (1998).

Currently, debates between pragmatism and relativism and between political factions within social constructionism have prompted what Gergen (1998a) has termed "a flight into realism." The new spin-off of scientific realist and critical realist social constructionism (e.g., Greenwood, 1994; Collier, 1998, respectively) is focused on empirical inquiry into the social processes that construct knowledge. These new realists insist that there is an underlying objective reality behind subjectively observable phenomena and moral commitment, even if its scientific representation is at all times provisional, imperfect, and socially constructed. As a result, facts can be evaluated on the basis of their facilitating the making of dependably accurate predictions about the phenomenon in question. In other words, some truths are more effective than others. Neo-realists also insist that as important as discourse is, it underdetermines our sense of social and personal reality. They maintain that not all human behaviors and knowledge are due to social practices. The world, the self and society triangulate our sense of reality (Farrell, 1996).

The development of new realism is too recent to afford any historical perspective, and too multivocal to be easily characterized. However, among its constituents would stand the situated cognitivists and activity theorists that have recently attracted the attention of many educational researchers (Kirshner & Whitson, 1977; Wertsch, 1998). For a more detailed review of constructionism, see Hruby (in press).

Discussion and Implications

What distinguishes constructivists from people with other orientations is an emphasis on the generative, organizational, and selective nature of human perception, understanding, and memory, as well as the theoretical building metaphor guiding thought and inquiries (Spivey, 1997). This perspective on understanding has grown in popularity within education generally (Phillips, 2000), and is increasingly invoked in literacy education. However, so long as literacy scholars mean different things by a given term, confusion, categorical error, and arguments across inappropriate levels will likely ensue. Thus, we wish to emphasize the need, at the very least, for specification and illustration when employing these wide-ranging terms.

Consider how constructivism can address, if not elude, the symbol grounding problem in reading theory. Readers organize the content of text by applying their knowledge of structure, and connecting related ideas by generating links. Because they cannot, or may not want to, retain all of the information, they select from the available content. They consciously make selections on the basis of some relevance principle. This criterion may be textual (van Dijk, 1979), depending upon how high the content is placed in the text structure (Meyer, 1975), or contextual, depending upon how salient the content is for the reading task (Hayes, Waterman, & Robinson, 1977; Pichert & Anderson, 1977). This criterion may also reflect some specific interest of readers (Anderson, Reynolds, Schallert, & Goetz, 1977). With maturity, readers develop an awareness of textual importance, and they use that knowledge in making selections.

Many models of constructivism reject any direct verification of knowledge by comparing the constructed model with the outside world. Its most substantial issue is how the subject can choose between different constructions to select the correct one. Readers both organize and select content as they construct mental representations of a text. They use a macroprocessing strategy based on knowledge and use of the organizational patterns of discourse (Kintsch & Yarbrough, 1982). They approach texts knowing how discourse is conventionally organized and how to use text structure to guide their understanding. Furthermore, there is evidence that readers intentionally restructure a text when they disagree with the message (Meyer & Freedle, 1984).

Readers generate connections of their own in the form of inferences (Clark, 1977), which become an integral part of the mental representation of the text (Kintsch, 1974). Various types of inferences have been identified (Seifert, Robertson, & Black, 1985), but some types seem more important than others in the reading of certain texts, such as causal inferences in the reading of stories (Kemper, 1982).

In addition, understanding a text is generative in that readers bring forth some material not explicitly signaled by the text as well as material that is. Kintsch (1974) addressed the role of inferencing: "Meaning for a text is anything but verbatim and involves making use of inferences in complex ways" (p. 253). He saw most inference generating as a means of achieving connectivity when texts did not provide connective cues. Kintsch has also given attention to selectivity. Some units would become part of the mental text base. They would be remembered, but some would not. Readers would tend to eliminate and not remember those units that are not connected and not high in the hierarchy.

Meyer's (1975) *The Organization of Prose and Its Effects on Memory* can be seen as a study of selectivity because what received most attention was whether or not readers would select for memory what was prominent in the structure of a text. For Meyer, understanding and memory were characterized primarily by selectivity. She focused on the selectiveness of recall after someone reads a text. Her study confirmed that placement would influence recall because the target paragraph was better recalled when placed high.

In many studies of text comprehension, readers seem to use organizational patterns signaled by the text and they preferentially select textually prominent items as they build their own meanings (Kintsch & Yarbrough, 1982; McGee, 1982). Frequently, a relationship is established between organizing and selecting because readers who replicate the pattern also tend to remember the units that are most related to the top-level pattern. When van Dijk (1979) considered the research on selecting, he attributed reader's selection of prominently placed content to use of a criterion based on textual relevance. Goetz and Armbruster (1980) called this preferential selection of prominently positioned units a "levels effect."

Whether such research on the presumed structure of knowledge has actually begun to reveal the structure of the brain, memory, or comprehension is an open question. But it has inarguably provided a set of heuristics to describe rationales for teaching approaches that research has indicated have some effectiveness when employed under conditions similar to those set up in the research. Thus, constructivist models of learning or text comprehension have already had a utility in literacy education research. The recent turn toward sociocognitive and sociocultural perspectives in literacy education have been reflected in the shift in interest from cognitive constructivist to social constructivist and constructionist models of comprehension by literacy educators. But we would be wary of too simple appropriations of these terms without in-depth explanation of just what the researchers mean by them. In any event, one caveat should always be borne in mind: describing a model is not necessarily the same thing as explaining a phenomenon.

Conclusion

Duckworth (1987) defined constructivism succinctly: "Meaning is not given to us in our encounters, but it is given by us, constructed by us, each in our own way, according to how our understanding is currently organized" (p. 112). The emphasis on organization of experience, on generation of meaning, and on selection of what is relevant is why constructivism challenges traditional beliefs about knowledge and learning. It represents the contrary view that what we take to be objective knowledge and truth is the result of perspective and both are created, not discovered by mind (Schwandt, 1994).

In this paper we have attempted to review the various ways the terms constructivism and constructionism have been employed. In light of the constructivist insight, we must humbly concede the impossibility of setting matters straight for all time. We thus leave the issue to the creative and informed constructions of our field, and hope that in some small measure we have helped to caution those who would invoke these terms that care in their use is always in order.

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PHILOSOPHICAL DILEMMAS IN UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE LITERACY PROGRAMS

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Abstract

This paper explores four major philosophical dilemmas facing college and university professors in undergraduate and graduate literacy education programs. These dilemmas include the type of methodology espoused as appropriate for teaching children; the type of assessments that should be used; the uses and abuses of technology in the reading/language arts curriculum; and the quality and quantity of fieldwork experiences as they relate to the first three dilemmas. Highlights of each dilemma are presented within the context of our own research and experiences. We offer suggestions for resolving each dilemma as a way of lessening the dissonance between what we should be doing and what we actually are doing.

It is important for those of us responsible for preparing preservice and inservice teachers to constantly rethink our own philosophies and practices within the context of our own institutions and the surrounding community, given the impact of research findings on reading/language arts instructional viewpoints. Often arising from our rethinking are philosophical and practical dilemmas that impact our students, our programs, and our reputations.

Four major dilemmas that we face in undergraduate and graduate programs in literacy education are: methodology, assessment, technology, and field experiences. With methodology, we often encounter differences between our own personal training and beliefs, our colleagues' orientation, and what is expected and wanted and needed in schools. With assessment, we grapple with the uses and value of authentic testing versus standardized testing and how each supports state standards. We also have to address the notion of how the state standards fit with our own schema for assessment and how we can develop our own programs to assist students with understanding the requirements and the implications of state standards. With technology, we encounter differences in the technological skills that we bring to our courses, what we should possess to be effective in our courses, and how to cope with the differences. With field experiences, we struggle with our desire to provide students with the right kinds of experiences and supervision that will complement coursework and prepare them for student teaching.

After conversations with other faculty members and as a result of our own experience, highlights of the philosophical and practical issues and conflicts surrounding each dilemma are presented within. Suggestions are offered for resolving each dilemma to help lessen the dissonance between what we should be doing and what we actually are doing. These suggestions come from our own research as well as what we have learned from stakeholders in the field.

The Methodology Dilemma

Providing exposure to the type of methodology espoused as appropriate for teaching children is one of the first dilemmas which face college instructors. Pressley, Rankin, and Yokoi (2000) indicate that a teacher's education should include exposure to a number of approaches and practices. However, how do college professors work with the swinging pendulum in methodologies and still continue to be aligned with their personal philosophy about teaching?

Trends in Methodology

Reading. The picture concerning the trends is a variegated yarn sweater and it is difficult to follow each thread. Within the last 50 years, there seem to have arisen three major trends: balanced reading instruction, phonics or skills-based instruction, and whole language philosophy. Balanced reading instruction is one of the newest trends, but what is balanced reading instruction really? Are some programs more or less balanced than others? Another view of balanced reading is that it is an eclectic approach, using a combination of instructional methods (Vacca, Vacca & Gove, 2000). Welna (1999) purports that an "unbalanced" reading program may really be the solution.

A second method, the phonics or skills instructional approach, has been considered a more traditional methodology. However, we might ask: What skills does the skills approach include? What are the goals of this approach? Where does this strand of yarn lead? Vacca, Vacca and Gove (2000) wonder whether reading is considered a single set of skills or subskills under this approach. In the past, basal reading series relied heavily upon this approach.

Of the third trend, whole language philosophy, we might ask—will the real thing stand up? By Goodman's (1986) own admission, there are not many school district reading programs which have implemented the true whole language philosophy in this country. This piece of yarn seems to have gotten lost in the fabric of school curriculum reform. However, literature-based instruction has grown out of the whole language movement and is a viable approach being used by many school systems today.

To see what is occurring with the trends, we must first look at the research to discover what is happening in the practice. Barry (1992) studied 19 schools in 9 different school districts in a southeastern state. Basal readers were utilized primarily by 69% of the 206 teachers in this study. (We might ask were the basal readers part of a skills-based program or balanced reading instruction?) An additional 14% of the teachers reported using the skills approach, 5% were cited as using an "eclectic approach," 3% were using the whole language approach, and 9% were involved in a primary program which is skills oriented.

In one Northern Plains state, Zalud and Richardson (1994) surveyed elementary and middle school teachers and reported that a combination of phonics, skills and holistic instruction was being used in the classrooms. Zalud and Richardson concluded that many school districts only use the best elements from any one approach and seem to employ an eclectic approach.

Traynelis-Yurek and Strong (1999) in a survey of 313 school districts in 41 states discovered that 75% of the school districts in the study reported using a literature-based program. A basal reading series was utilized by 15% of the districts and 10% stated that they were using a whole language approach.

Reading methodology in the United Kingdom, as reported by Ireson (1995), is not any more consistently practiced than in the United States. Ireson and others found that the 121 primary teachers surveyed employed a wide variety of reading and writing practices and that no prevalent pattern emerged.

Although we may favor one method over another, we need to instruct our students in different methodologies. We suggest scheduling monthly meetings to work with colleagues to map out, monitor, update, and revise content and methodologies offered to students. This involves a definite time commitment, but it helps us to have a meeting of the minds and to decentralize our focus from our own individual biases to a broader outlook.

Other Language Arts. There are also different trends concerning language arts instruction, Traynelis-Yurek and Strong (1999) report that in 53% of 313 school districts across the United States a published or basal spelling series is being utilized. The other 47% of the districts in the study reported that they were not using a published spelling series, but rather a combination of developmental or invented spelling and a basal spelling series, individualized spelling and developmental or invented spelling, or some other mixture. The pendulum has shifted from the exclusive use of a traditional basal series and methodology to the use of other non-traditional methods.

Concerning another tool of composition, handwriting, there is also variation occurring between traditional or non-slanted manuscript and slanted. Strong and Traynelis-Yurek (1999, October) found that in 259 school districts in 41 states, traditional script or nonslanted manuscript is taught by 53% and 47% districts reported teaching slanted manuscript.

The difficulty lies in the lack of consistency of methodologies in reading and language arts. Keeping abreast with the terminology in different methodologies is a difficult task, but we can read journals, attend and present at national meetings and conduct our own research. We also need to make certain that our instructional repertoire includes various ways to incorporate spelling, handwriting and the other language arts methods.

At our university, we employ adjuncts who are reading and language arts supervisors, English department heads and reading teachers to teach beginning courses in reading and language arts courses or to co-teach and co-plan courses with a full-time faculty member. In this way, we do not necessarily compromise our own beliefs because we are involved in a collaborative approach where students can see and hear multiple perspectives. This type of program also helps us to reflect on our own beliefs and possibly modify them in accordance with what is successfully happening in schools.

The Issue of Modeling. Then there is the issue of modeling in our college classrooms. One often asked question is: How can we demonstrate a constructivist model for our students if we are teaching in a room where the chairs are bolted to the floor? Bruneau, Ford, Scanlon, and Strong (1996) report that it is not enough to tell students how to develop holistic literacy practices. They need to experience the constructivist learning. Related to this question is: What explanations do we present to our preservice students about a classroom teacher that they are observing who does not model any of the approaches that we have modeled in class? If you are involved in a practicuum attached to the methods course which you are teaching, you may have experienced this difficulty. Weidler and Lonberger (1993) found that often there are differences between ideas presented in the college course and the typical methodologies used in classroom instruction.

We make certain that there is adequate time to discuss thoroughly the situations observed in the field. Field notes and journal entries can be used for these discussions. Asking our students to exchange notes and journal entries concerning their observations, making Venn diagrams to compare and contrast observation notes are some of the activities which occur during the class sessions. We refrain from the temptation to cover a great deal of material rather than to emphasize the basics. We spend less time on lecture and more time in meaningful discussion. We find that discussion rather than lecture helps students to focus on the basics which in turn helps them to have a more thorough understanding of different methodologies.

Although we cannot always regulate what methods our students observe in the public/private school classroom, we do stress to our students that they need to use their understanding of different methods to discern whether such methodologies are actually working for the students and teachers they observe.

The Assessment Dilemma

Assessment is not a new concept for teachers and teacher educators. Informal and formal assessment have historically been a part of schooling, from primary through higher education. What is new, however, is the widespread public interest in "accountability" and "standards" and their impact on assessment.

High stakes assessment (Hoffman et al., 1999) is a new term which has been coined. This term suggests there are consequences of good (high) or poor (low) assessment scores. For example, in Pennsylvania scores of performance on the statewide test are published in local newspapers. Schools receive cash grants if their students make the most progress on the test. Recent reports indicate that teachers in some New York City schools have "helped" students perform better on the tests because of pressure from principals to increase scores.

High stakes assessment is tied to state standards. In 1972, one state had minimum competencies; by 1985, 34 states reported having them. Most states mandated competencies by 1990. We are therefore continually reminded that testing will always be an integral part of the educational system (Hoffman et al, 1999).

The first dilemma we as educators of preservice and inservice teachers face is what we know is currently expected of classroom teachers and what we believe about assessment. Classroom teachers ultimately need to satisfy all stakeholders (students, administrators, parents, state boards of education, and national accrediting agencies). At the same time, we may not necessarily buy into what the stakeholders want. Consider the following statements as a way to clarify your beliefs about assessment:

1. Assessment informs instruction.
2. Assessment should emerge from the classroom rather than be imposed.
3. Assessment practices should be "client-centered."
4. Assessment should be standardized to better guarantee attainment of standards.

5. Assessment should be nonstandardized to be fair to the individual.
6. Different constituencies need different information.

If you believe that assessment should inform instruction (statement one), can you justify standardized assessment that is imposed rather than generated from the classroom (statement two)? How do we respond to high stakes assessment (statement 4) and still encourage children's growth and learning (statements 3 and 5)? We have come to the conclusion that each type of test serves a purpose and that, regardless of our own beliefs, we must expose preservice and inservice teachers to all forms of assessment (statement 6).

Future and current students need to understand the components of total assessment packages and how each supports the development of a comprehensive profile of the individual and groups of students. The notion that high stakes assessment does not encourage the individual child's growth needs to be tempered with the idea that it simply is one piece of the assessment profile. While testing is usually included in our educational psychology and methodology courses, we have found that this is not enough. Formal and informal testing must be explored in reading and language arts classes as well. One component, therefore, in our methods courses is an examination of all of the tests utilized in the schools.

Preservice and inservice teachers need to be literate in the language of standardized tests (i.e. norms, stanines, percentiles), their procedures, and components. Analysis of test items to determine skills measured is, in our courses, followed by brainstorming ways to integrate skills instruction into the curriculum. Our students practice administering and interpreting tests with children of different ages and abilities. We ask them to utilize what they have learned from test data to plan instruction. Hollingsworth and Teel (1991) found that just introducing information and theory was not sufficient; preservice teachers need opportunities to apply them to instructional designs.

It is not enough to teach preservice and inservice teachers how to successfully administer and interpret test results to plan instruction. They also need to understand how to help children take tests. As Calkins, Montgomery, and Santman (1998) suggest, it is not about teaching the test but rather teaching how to take the test. However, we cannot assume that our students are experienced test takers themselves just because they have taken and/or administered tests. Instead, it is good practice to teach them how to approach test taking. In this way, we are not only teaching or reviewing test taking strategies but also modeling how to teach children these strategies.

To help our students more fully appreciate the dilemmas associated with assessment, we have found it helpful to share with students our dilemmas in assessing them for their performance in our courses. Additionally, we use a variety of assessments, formal and informal.

"A balanced curriculum requires a balanced approach to assessment" (Herman, Aschbacher & Winters, 1992, p.9). Modeling effective practices in undergraduate and graduate courses is one of the best ways to impact on preservice and inservice teachers' beliefs about assessment.

The Technology Dilemma

A third dilemma that we face is our role in promoting technology in the literacy curriculum. This dilemma is both philosophical in determining technology's value and practical in deciding on the level of technological literacy needed. We struggle to resolve what we think that we should be doing to provide for our preservice teachers, and what we actually can do to promote our students' technological skills.

The hype surrounding technology is extraordinary, whether it is from the media, our accrediting bodies, our licensing agencies, our administrators, or our school district partnerships. A day of meetings in our academic settings yields any number of pushes and prods to use technology in our courses or as our courses. The latest wave of articles in our field has skipped from examples of technology-based applications to autobiographical tales of professors' experiences (some of which are harrowing) in developing online courses. Supposedly, everyone is a beneficiary—the students, the professors, and the college administration.

Notwithstanding the pressure to conform to the latest pleas to use emerging technologies, we find ourselves struggling with what we believe, what we should be delivering to our students, and what we should know in order to deliver.

A Rationale for Using Technology

A question that continues to arise is whether technology is worth the energy needed to use it in K-12 classrooms. There now is enough research about the benefits of technology proving that it ought to be promoted for literacy instruction. Research indicates that technology serves as an effective means of engaging and motivating students to want to succeed (Fogarty, 1998; Hay, 1996; Kirkpatrick & Cuban, 1998; Strong, 1982) and as a means for improving student performance (Clariana, 1994; Hasselbring et al., 1997; Hyland, 1998; Kirkpatrick & Cuban, 1998; Shiah, Mastropieri, & Scruggs, 1995; "Study Shows Technology-Achievement Link," 1997; Wilson, 1993)

Students' access to the many available technologies enables them to navigate through information and ideas in a recursive fashion. Immediate access to icons, images, animations, voice, and sound supports students' comprehension of text by developing schemata about the content on the screen. Written and spoken prompts built into the programs guide students as they interact with text (Wepner & Ray, 2000).

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Delivering to Our Students

Given that enough research exists to support technology's role in literacy development, what should we be delivering to our students? At the very least and in order for our students to be employable, they need to know the vernacular of the field (for example, web-based learning, hypermedia, DVD [digital video disc], Internet Service Provider, html [hypertext markup language], and electronic books).

Similar to preparing students to pass the PRAXIS exam or create lesson and unit plans, we need to insure that when students graduate from our programs they have specific technological competencies. Highlights of such competencies include:

- how to use and apply software for word recognition and vocabulary, reading development, writing, and content learning;
- how to search and use the web as a reference tool;
- how to communicate with others through webpages, email, listservs, and distribution lists;
- how to use tool-based software such as Powerpoint to create multimedia presentations;
- how to mix and match desktop and Internet tools for lesson and unit development;
- how to use basic desktop and software applications for the expression of ideas and data management.

Our curriculum should include expectations for students' exit competencies in technology. Our goal should be that technology is almost an invisible part of the curriculum in that the focus is not so much on technology but its use as a resource for learning, data analysis, and communication. If our students see that we are doing this for them, they in turn will do it for their students. An excellent resource for establishing competencies for our students is the International Society for Technology in Education's (2000) publication, *National Educational Technology Standards for Students: Connecting Curriculum and Technology.*

We also need to insure that someone on the faculty is equipped to teach students the skills needed for working with technology, and that this "expert" faculty member is assigned and rewarded for instructing students with technology. With this expectation should be a continuous push to have resources that service the faculty and students appropriately.

Our Own Technological Literacy

Of course, the better our own technological literacy, the better we ourselves can deliver to our students. There are certain things we can do. We can actually use the K-W-L technique to find out what we know, what we need to learn, and what we have learned and still need to learn. We then can look for assistance from faculty, friends, and family. We can attend workshops and courses, especially those offered by our universities and professional organizations. We also can look to our universities for technology support and tutoring. As you seek assistance, identify the kind of expert you need: web expert, machine expert, software expert, systems expert, or research expert. The technology field has become so complicated that those "expert" in technology may not necessarily have the expertise that you need.

Recently, our school began to offer "technotutors" to faculty. These technotutors are full-time faculty with certain areas of technological expertise who receive paid overload credit each semester to make office calls to tutor faculty on creating webpages, searching the World Wide Web, etc. Faculty essentially contact a clearinghouse for help, and the technotutor with the appropriate expertise gets assigned.

Part of our ability to deliver means that we are aware of what the school districts expect from our students. Informal needs assessments help us to find out what our neighboring districts have in support, personnel, resources, staff development, and what they actually are doing in their classrooms, their labs, and with the community. Observations, telephone conversations, email, and contacts within the district and outside the district help us gather information. We can then use existing resources from school districts and community agencies to insure student competencies.

Although we present ideas to resolve the philosophical and practical dilemmas surrounding technology, we recognize that as literacy/teacher educators, we will continue to argue with ourselves about its value, its place in our curricula, and its role in our lives. Yet, because we are the true "information highway" for preparing teachers, we need to provide them with the best possible route to their destination, with technology as one of the professional tools used to get them there.

The Field Experience Dilemma

Posner (1989) states that "field experiences typically constitute the centerpiece of any teacher education program. Early field experiences enable students to get their feet wet and to explore teaching as a profession. Later field experiences increase the students' responsibility for conducting classes and help the students assume the full role of teacher" (p. ix). Field experiences are defined differently from state to state depending on regulations and requirements, as well as interpretations by the various preparing institutions.

Undergraduate Programs

When should the first field experiences requirement be offered to preservice teachers? Slick (1995) states that research by such education leaders as Goodlad, Berliner, and Boyer "emphasized that teachers of the future will need to participate early and continuously during their teacher preparation programs in the public school arena where they will eventually be employed" (p. xi). Slick further states that there needs to be a predetermined program of field experiences, integrated into the theoretical framework of teacher education programs, that enables students to experience the culture of teaching.

Typically, the first and/or second year of course work in an undergraduate program focuses upon liberal arts courses, offering limited or no opportunity for experiences in an actual classroom. Even when admission to the education program is delayed until the second or third year of the program, provision needs to be made to have introductory courses that include actual classroom observation and participation. When field experiences are connected with coursework, there is a direct relationship between what is taught in the course and what is happening in the classroom so that theory develops into practice, and vice versa.

Our university has made a concerted effort to redesign the field experiences component to provide early and significant opportunities to put theory into practice. Freshmen take an introductory course to teaching which provides a directed and supervised opportunity to observe in classrooms and participate in other activities such as attending educationally related conferences, interviewing principals as well as new and experienced teachers, and attending faculty and school board meetings. A children's literature course requires students to tell and read stories to children and conduct booktalks in a local classroom. A reading/language arts methods course meets once a week on campus to introduce theory and a second time each week in an assigned classroom to work with a teacher and a small group of children at the elementary level. Students observe and deliver lessons throughout the two-semester course. Students in a science methods course participate in Saturday morning workshops with elementary aged children who volunteer to attend to help these children develop science literacy.

Sometimes, we find that our colleagues are reluctant to incorporate field experiences into course content. They are concerned that they will not be able to "cover" as much material as they believe is necessary. They are less willing to accept the idea that the students may learn more when they are able to observe theory actually put into practice. At the very least, faculty need to use some (but not excessive) class time to have students model lessons and serve as critic/discussants for such model lessons.

Peer pressure, successful role modeling, and compensation are three incentives that help convince reluntant faculty to incorporate field experience. For example, once a few faculty members have incorporated successful field experiences, the success is recognized by students, administrators, and other faculty. These successful faculty members can then motivate others to emulate their structure for connecting classroom instruction with field experiences.

Graduate Education

Students earning initial instructional certification at the graduate level experience different dilemmas. Many of them are employed full time and are taking courses on the evening or weekends. Many are non-traditional students changing careers. They have earned their undergraduate degrees in unrelated fields. It is difficult to arrange field experiences for them during the typical school day. When they are ready to student teach, they may have difficulty adjusting to the classroom setting and school culture.

One way to address this dilemma is to develop course requirements that may require students to use personal leave time to participate in actual classrooms—observing and working with children. Examples would include the following: storytelling in the public library, children's Saturday outreach programs in conjunction with specific methodology courses, professional days to attend conferences, teaching a lesson on-line to a group of children, and viewing and critiquing videotaped lessons.

Cooperating Schools

Establishing and developing relationships with schools is critical for our programs. A major dilemma that instructors and/or the field experience coordinators face is finding cooperating schools and teachers who subscribe to the university's philosophy. Can compromise occur? How does the instructor handle students' questioning of differences between theory and practice?

Indeed, compromise needs to occur. It is impossible to find a perfect philosophical match between the university and the many school districts used for field experiences. Instructors need to be prepared to discuss the differences with students about, for example, methodology, assessment, and use of technology. Discussions can be in the form of case studies of situations observed, problem-solving exercises, journal reflections, and alternative lesson and unit plans. It is important that instructors capitalize on students' observations, experiences, and responses to actual classrooms.

Another dilemma facing instructors and/or field experience coordinators is identifying cooperating teachers who are willing to become models of excellent instructional strategies for our students. It is essential to work closely with principals so that they recommend teachers well-suited for these positions. It takes teachers who are confident and competent to allow for the intrusion of both students and university supervisors in their classrooms. It also requires that teachers feel that what could be an intrusion is actually a benefit to their students and themselves. One way to handle this dilemma is to create incentives for professional development. Workshops, graduate tuition reimbursement, receptions, awards, local recognition, gift certificates to book stores, and even laptops have been and can be used to encourage cooperating teachers' wholehearted participation with the university.

Students' transitions from "student teacher" to professional teacher occur when they have repeated experiences in schools with exemplary cooperating teacher and university role models. These experiences enable them to develop their own style of teaching literacy, a hallmark of successful literacy education programs.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our dilemmas arise from changes that are internal and external to our profession. Internally, our colleagues conduct research and develop theories that offer us ideas and perspectives that may or may not be compatible with our own way of thinking about literacy education. Even colleagues from different disciplines often enlighten us or provoke us to think differently about our philosophies and habits of mind. Externally, politicians, legislators, and bureaucrats create changes that, while not always indelibly penned, affect our thoughts and practices. When these changes are incompatible with our own professional philosophies and practices, we naturally experience dissonance.

Some of us jump wholeheartedly on the most recent bandwagon. Others of us, with our more cynical personas, have difficulty giving up our diehard beliefs for what we consider to be the latest fad that comes our way. Regardless of our personal beliefs, we need to take responsibility for preparing our preservice and inservice teachers for the classrooms in which they find themselves. We also need to make certain that our preservice and inservice teachers can think critically and creatively about literacy instruction so that they can make informed and reflective decisions about their own literacy practices in the classroom.

In a sense, the same standards developed for teachers in general apply to those preparing to teach reading/language arts. Adapted from a statement written by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (1999), our students must:

- Possess a thorough grasp of the knowledge base undergirding literacy practice, a repertoire of instructional strategies, and skills to apply these to the literacy education of individual students
- Understand and use methods of inquiry and research findings in making professional decisions about literacy education
- Have a comprehensive understanding of methods of student assess-

ment and measurement including use of observations, design of standardized examinations, and how to interpret and use the result of these evaluations

In order for our students to succeed, we must: be available—both cognitively and affectively; stay current through our own professional development; be flexible in our thinking, yet anchored in ideas supported by valid research; develop new skills and strategies; and be leaders of literacy education.

The four dilemmas presented represent critical issues of our time that make a difference in the way we prepare our students. While the ever-changing nature of each of these issues creates dissonance, we need to adopt a stance that enables us to meet our students' needs.

With methodology, we need to have a thorough knowledge base about each of the methodologies in order to provide "balanced instruction." We must also appreciate the benefits of each methodology on student's learning. This appreciation will assist us in providing "balanced instruction" to our university students which, in turn, will equip them to function effectively in any type of instructional setting which they may encounter.

With assessment, we need to come to appreciate that there is a national obsession with standardized testing and learn how to balance our own beliefs about assessment with the pressure put upon school districts to perform. We need to prepare our students to use all types of assessment tools to benefit children.

With technology, we need to come to appreciate its permanent place in society and find ways for it to have a permanent place in our curriculum, whether taught by us or taught by our colleagues.

With field experiences, we need to insist and plan for students' field experiences so that they are prepared to approach student teaching with the necessary skills and competencies. We need to figure out ways to work with our faculty and our local school district personnel to create conditions for success.

We do not pretend to have all the answers. We simply want to help raise the level of awareness that we are not alone in having to cope with these dilemmas, because we are the ones who need to find solutions to survive.

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EXPANDING HORIZONS IN LITERACY TEACHER EDUCATION

The Construction of "How-to" Books in a Secondary Content Area Literacy Course: The Promise and Barriers of Writing-to-Learn Strategies

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Abstract

This paper describes a secondary content area literacy course assignment to make a "how-to" book. A "how-to" book describes a process and explains how to do a variety of tasks such as dissecting a cat, writing a parody, or drawing a landscape. "How-to" books are suggested as an avenue to promote the relevance and value of writing across the secondary content curriculum. Positive aspects of secondary preservice subject area teachers' comments included: promotion of construction of knowledge, motivation, pride in one's work, research and expertise, as well as reflection on their teaching. Barriers cited were lack of time for projects in secondary content instruction and low expectations of future students.

There is a growing body of research on writing as an avenue to promote learning across the curriculum (Britton et al., 1975; Gere, 1985; Soven, 1999). Standards jointly developed by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association (National Council of Teachers of English, 1996) state that students need frequent opportunities throughout their day to engage in various types of writing. Students benefit from seeing many examples of how readers and writers work and the multiple purposes for reading and writing (Braunger & Lewis, 1998). They need opportunities to combine reading and writing-which research has shown improves the skill in both (Tierney & Shanahan, 1991) while promoting higher thinking levels (Sweet, 1993). Maxwell (1996) believes that writing enhances every subject, in a variety of forms and for a variety of purposes. Lunsford (1993) calls on teachers to create a "new scene for writing", one that "challenges divisions between disciplines, genres, and media" (p. 10).

Although the process writing movement has been encouraged for more than 30 years, process writing activities are not common in all classrooms our students experience (Lenski & Pardieck, 1999). Despite the benefits of writing in the content areas, some preservice and practicing teachers believe they are inadequate as writers themselves and feel uncertain how to enhance students' writing skills (Bowie, 1996). If teachers do not like to write, they are likely to assign less writing than teachers who are enthusiastic about writing (Claypool, 1980). Rivard (1994) suggests that teachers perceive their lack of preparation as a major obstacle to implementing writing-to-learn strategies in the classroom. Kamman's (1990) survey of secondary education students shows that lack of knowledge about these strategies and lingering doubts about their effectiveness for enhancing the learning of content, impeded their general acceptance in the classroom.

The challenge for teachers is to provide instruction that promotes achievement in curricular objectives while offering students opportunities for writing that they see as relevant. Rather than adding on isolated writing activities within a framework of a present course design, it is necessary to have a new vision of instruction. Although Tchudi and Yates (1983) recommend that when including writing in content instruction, "it is vital to remember to keep content at the center of the writing process" (p. 8), Gray (1988) encourages teachers to sort out the purposes of their teaching and connect writing to each of them.

To promote curriculum objectives, Bomer (1995) suggests nontraditional writing assignments that consider the learner's areas of interest, expertise and quest. Johnson (1998) encourages teachers to develop students' literacy through making books. Zemelman, Daniels and Hyde (1998) believe that publication of student writing is essential. They recommend "making bound books, cataloging student work in the school library, setting up displays in classrooms...[and] in neighborhood stores" (p. 62).

Process writing activities incorporated into preservice education classes have been successful in changing the writing attitudes of preservice teachers (Lenski, 1994). One authentic method that is proving successful at the secondary level is writing "how-to" books (Huntley-Johnson, Merritt & Huffman, 1997). A "how-to" book describes a process and explains how to do a variety of tasks such as dissecting a cat, traveling the Oregon Trail, writing a parody, drawing a landscape, or using automotive lift equipment. It is offered as an additional avenue to promote the relevance and value of writing while promoting interest and achievement in secondary content area classrooms. "How-to" books have utility and a purpose beyond the classroom. This sort of assignment invites students to live like researchers and provides them with an avenue to go public. As Moffett notes, "Students...[are] eager to read each other's directions, both to learn to do what others can do and to find out what others know how to do" (1981, p. 115). Moreover, making books prompts students to consider their audiences and provides an outlet for their writing. Consistent with authentic instruction (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993), the rationale and benefits of "how-to" books include providing students with a purpose for writing, promoting construction of knowledge, enhancing relevance and connections to personal interest, promoting student-driven learning, inviting students to be researchers, creating opportunities for students to build academic skills, promoting classroom communities, as well as increasing attainment of curricular objectives.

As a university secondary content area literacy instructor, I have used inductive methods such as "how-to" books to provide persuasive and personal experiences for my students. My intent is that they will decide for themselves the value of including writing in their content area instruction and later promote interest and achievement by using this strategy. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to describe the method of a secondary content area literacy course assignment to make a "how-to" book and to discuss the promise and barriers of writing-to-learn strategies as suggested by this experience.

The Assignment

I ask students to choose a topic in their subject area and to make a "how-to" book (which is worth 20% of their grade) that explains how to do something and would help their students learn concepts related to a topic. Students are asked to meet the following requirements:

1. The words "How-to" are to be part of the title, which appears on the front page with the student's name.
2. The book is to be about 10 sheets (or 20 pages long), either laminated or contained in a notebook with plastic sleeves.
3. The book is to be typed, proof read, and spell-checked and contain photos and/or graphics.
4. The second to last page is to include a list of resources used to write the book (including at least two different types of resources).
5. The back page is to include a photograph of the student, their credentials, and the copyright date.

My Example of a "How-to" Book

To promote successful student efforts, I bring copies of former students' front and back covers, and copies of a few entire "how-to" books. I also provide an example of my own "how-to" book. I show students my laminated and bound book entitled, "How to Grow Birdhouse Gourds" from my own biology teaching. I created it because one state science objective is to learn the life cycle of a flowering plant. My book is written on yellow-orange paper and has a Native American motif border on each page. There is an empty package of seeds on the front cover with the title. In addition to the pages of 17 sequentially ordered photographs and captions of my attempt to grow birdhouse gourds, there are pages with botanical information and uses for birdhouse gourds. There is a page on growing, pest control and harvesting tips, as well as information about drying, cutting and decorating gourds. There are photographs of decorated birdhouse gourds and a website address for the American Gourd Society. On the back cover is bibliographical information as well as a photograph of me standing next to my birdhouse gourd trellis and plot with my credentials for writing the book.

I explain to my students the process that I went through to put the book together. I suggest to them,.O'Conner's (1999) notion to, "think, read, learn some more . . . when you think your egg is ready to hatch, it'll hatch. In the mean time, sit on it a bit longer" (p. 10). I reassure them that writing is a messy business and encourage students to explore every potential source of information: interviews, personal experiences, films, pamphlets, lecture notes, CDs, books, and internet information. I also suggest O'Connor's advice,

> Don't plunge into [writing] right away . . . stop and think for a moment. Interrogate yourself: *What* do you want to say, *why* do you want to say it, and *how* do you want to say it? If you're not clear about these three things, take a walk...and think some more. And loosen up, for heaven's sake. You're just thinking (p. 21).

I explain to them that before I start assembling my book I collect as much information as I can. Then, I clear off a table, put my photographs in order, write short captions for each of them, and scan them into the computer. Then I categorize the other information and make an outline. I decide which information should go in front of my photographs and which information should come after. Then I paraphrase the information from books and the internet so that my "how-to" book is something I have authored, not just a collage of cut out passages. I tell students that a "how-to" book is not supposed to be a laminated research report and that keeping it simple is important when trying to keep a reader's interest. When my book is written, proof read, and spell-checked, I find paper that matches the theme to print it on. For example, I used yellow-orange paper for this book because it is the color of the gourds before harvesting. Then, I have the pages laminated and bound.

Preservice Teachers' Book Presentation and Survey of Perceptions

The day the "how-to" books are due, students are seated in a circle and we begin by having each student tell their name, tell their content area, hold up their book, and read the title. Then, for individual sharing, students count off by twos. One group stays seated to share their book while the others walk around and chat with the seated group for about 15-20 minutes, then they exchange places. I look forward to this class every semester because the quality of a classroom is demonstrated in students' work and their work typically exceeds my expectations. Students enjoy looking at each other's books. For example, one said, "Just want to say it was so cool to see everyone's work! Lots of great minds!"

In an effort to understand my preservice teachers' thoughts about the value of this assignment, I ask them to fill out an anonymous 6-question survey:

1. How was the 'how-to' book assignment most helpful to you? How could it be most helpful to your future students?
2. What suggestions do you have if you made "how-to" books again or how would you change the assignment if you made them with your future students?
3. On a scale of 1-10 (1 = never use, 10 = definitely use), how likely are you to make "how-to" books with your students in the future?
4. Explain your reason for your answer to Question 3.
5. What have you learned about your subject area by making a "how-to" book?
6. What have you learned about writing by making a "how-to" book?

Survey Results and Discussion

The majority of preservice teachers thought that the assignment promoted content achievement, positive attitudes toward self and classroom instruction, creativity, and inclusion of classmates and family in learning. The average score for future use of "how-to" books with students was 7.25, (N = 102). The majority (57 students) rated "how-to" book use from 8 to 10 and explained the promise of writing to learn activities. Many of the 26 students who rated "how to" book use 5 or lower were music students who did not feel the assignment would be realistic since music classes had a "different focus" and writing would take away practice time. Others who rated the use of "how-to" books "5" or lower cited reasons such as: fear of lecture-mode cooperating teachers, uncertainty of implementing extended projects with students of varying skills, and disapproval of writing rather than actually doing the activities. The 19 students who rated "how-to" book use a 6 or 7 noted the lack of time for projects in secondary instruction or low expectations for students. Overall, two major themes emerged from student comments. The first theme focuses on positive aspects or the "promise" of writing to learn activities and the second focuses on "barriers" to writing to learn activities in secondary content area instruction. The remainder of the results and discussion that follow are separated into these two themes

The Promise of Writing-to-Learn Activities in Secondary Content Area Instruction

Preservice teachers wrote that they learned many specific things about their subject area and indicated that the assignment encouraged reflective practice. When asked what they had learned about writing, preservice teachers noted specific behaviors associated with the writing cycle including creativity, generating ideas, brainstorming, planning, organizing, focusing, paraphrasing, writing drafts, proof reading, and peer editing. They also noted that "writing comes in many sizes and shapes" and "does not have to be formal." The comments to follow are representative of the group.

Promoting the Construction of Knowledge

Preservice teachers, particularly those who rated the likelihood of asking their students to make a "how-to" book an "8" or above, wrote that making a "how-to" book promoted thinking and meaning. This was because the process encouraged them to break down areas of confusion and to analyze/synthesize what they had learned, and to organize their thoughts to make concepts clear. For example, one student wrote, "When a student has to discover information on a certain topic on their own they learn a lot more than if a teacher 'barks' at them about the information." Another said "When you have to write down something you already know or think you know, it helps you to reexamine it." Still another student noted that the assignment promoted authenticity and real learning. This was because students had to follow a process, which "goes beyond superficial learning and rates very high on Bloom's hierarchy." Other students said that the organizing helped them to learn. For instance, one student wrote, "I like arranging the information for some crazy reason. I was also able to absorb it in quickly. I'm sure I'll never forget what I learned." Thus, consistent with Britton et al. (1975), an essential part of the learning process became "explaining the matter to oneself." This is what students were doing when they responded in nontraditional ways to course topics. Furthermore, explaining the matter to themselves encouraged them to make connections between the subject and their own lives. They participated more actively, were aware of their responses to new material, and how it related to what they already know.

Preservice teachers also appreciated the opportunity to be creative. One wrote, "I felt like I was a kid again. I got to be creative." Preservice teachers thought that their students would also enjoy this way of learning. A student noted, "A 'how-to' book would be beneficial to a future student to take ordinary textbook chapters and make the subject matter come alive." A second student wrote, "I know that we will be doing a lot of hands-on projects in my class, while I am student teaching. The teacher also teaches art class and has a lot of living history projects. The 'how-to' book would fit in well for students who could use it to describe their occupation assignments."

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Eleanor Duckworth has examined the instructional conditions which encourages wonderful ideas. She notes that when knowledge is presented to students as already figured out, there is no place for students to play with ideas, do it themselves, and make it their own (see Meek, 1991). Students do not ask the instructor, "Do you want this?" (Huntley-Johnston, Merritt, & Huffman, 1997, p. 172), suggesting that they see no value to their work nor reason to keep their "how-to" book. Thus, "how-to" books enabled preservice teachers to express the subject in their own terms.

Promoting Motivation and Pride in Work

Preservice teachers, especially those most likely to incorporate "how-to" books into their future instruction, thought that the assignment was enjoyable and empowering. As one student observed, "Research and investigation are great means of stimulation for what otherwise may be a dormant mind." Another student recalled, "I had some students write books on how to make a bracelet and they enjoyed it very much. Students love to do projects like this. They loved to look at the books again and again." These thoughts are similar to the ideas of author Annie Dillard (1989) who shares, "Putting a book together is interesting and exhilarating. It is sufficiently difficult and complex that it engages all your intelligence" (p. 11).

Preservice teachers also appreciated the freedom to choose their own topic, and in the words of one student, "put the power of learning into the hands of the students." Preservice teachers thought that the sense of empowerment and interest would encourage their students to "do a good job on it." One student wrote, "how-to" books validate students thoughts. A student could feel like an author." Another student noted, "My students would gain ownership of the information presented in the 'how-to' book. As a result, they are more likely to remember the material." Thus, through this project, students were given evidence to trust their own thinking and writing. When students write from their personal vantage point they come to "own" the material themselves. This shift in ownership is an important finding because lecture materials are "owned" by instructors, not students. According to humanistic and critical pedagogy literature, students' feelings of self-worth are crucial factors in motivation and they need to feel empowered (Kemmis, 1995) before they are willing to begin to construct their own understanding (Hanrahan, 1999).

Promoting a Literate Community

Preservice teachers, especially those who rated the project an "8" or above, also believed that "how-to" books promoted student research and expertise. Preservice teachers appreciated the opportunity to gather information and to learn about available sources, such as internet sites and experts who they interviewed. One student wrote, "I learned there are more sources on-line now than there have been in the past year." Students also thought they had learned more by producing a book than from "reading it in a text, hearing a lecture, or just studying." One student wrote, "this format guarantees that you know your stuff." Students thought that by instructing others through their books, they were able to share their knowledge within their "various communities of discourse" (Connolly, 1989) and to see what interests other students had. A student noted, "I like the idea of becoming an 'expert'." Another student wrote, "I enjoyed telling about what I know a lot about. Kids also love to share what they know and this is a wonderful opportunity to let them do that".

Atwell (1987) talks about her classroom as a literate community. She describes that environment as "a place where people read, write, and talk about reading and writing, where everybody can be student and teacher, where everybody can come inside" (p. 240). Through this assignment, there was a redistribution of authority in the class, which afforded students and their work to be the principal text. Writing was an agent of change. No longer was only a single authoritative voice heard (O'Loughlin, 1992). Thus, writing promoted transformation for the students and the instructor since authority was redistributed within the class.

Promoting Reflective Practice

Another promise of this assignment and survey is the opportunity for future teachers to become reflective decision makers who are "intrinsically motivated to analyze a situation, set goals, plan and monitor actions, evaluate results, and reflect on their own professional thinkings" (Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993, p. 37). Shulman (1987) has described six categories of knowledge to master when becoming a teacher: (1) content/subject-matter knowledge; (2) pedagogical methods and theory; (3) curriculum; (4) characteristics of learners, (5) teaching contexts; and (6) educational purposes, ends, and aims. It is first necessary for a teacher to enjoy and know the content. Next, a teacher must consider the students being taught. Hollingsworth (1990) believes that changes in teachers' knowledge and beliefs help to shift their attention from technical concerns with students' activities toward a greater interest in student learning, which usually occurs after a few years of teaching.

Survey comments from students provided evidence of their metacognition about teaching. One student wrote, that making a "how-to" book was a "reconfirmation of how much I love my subject area." In addition to students' fondness for their content area, this assignment caused preservice teachers to think of how to translate their enjoyment and knowledge into instruction. For example, one student realized, "knowing something and teaching/writing about it are two very different things." Another student said, "I learned an alternative way to look at a concept by relating it to something more familiar. I learned how much knowledge I have that I take for granted. It was good to break it down into steps, which I feel could help in teaching. I tend to combine some steps." Another student was able to put him or herself in a student's shoes and noted, "I was able to experience how it feels to learn." There was also evidence that students were focused on their future students. For instance, one student wrote, "I found myself constantly thinking how students might react if they made 'how-to' books. They could express something they enjoyed to their classmates." Another student thought that "there are so many different ways to get students to write in 'non-writing' classrooms." Thus, this evidence suggests that these future teachers were expanding their schemata for content territory likely to benefit from writing-to-learn activities.

Barriers to Writing-to-Learn Activities in Secondary Content Area Instruction

Two barriers were described by preservice teachers, particularly by those who rated the likelihood of using this assignment with their future students a "7" or lower: lack of time for projects and low expectations of students.

Lack of Time

Writing requires time and energy. A preservice teacher believed that "It could be difficult fitting a 'how-to' book in due to the length of time required to do the project." Another elaborated, "There are so many state objectives in a classroom for an instructor to achieve. I'm not sure where a 'how-to' book would rank." Hanrahan (1999) laments the passive resistance of students when "teachers felt obligated to deliver a predetermined curriculum regardless of its inappropriateness for the majority of their students" (p.713). Despite my efforts to walk preservice teachers through experiences that suggest the power of literacy to promote interest and achievement in content learning, it does not seem to be enough in all cases to change ideas away from transmissive teacher and text-centered methodology.

Low Expectations of Students

The expectations of mediocrity of future students by some preservice teachers was disturbing. One student wrote, "I would ask students to do this kind of activity if . . . I thought my students would actually try hard to get a good book done." A second student said, "I cannot see many high school students putting the time and effort necessary to complete such a project." A third student observed, "Our school is limited in resources. Many kids have little support at home. Some students may not have access to computers, copy machines and text graphics. It may be unfair for those who have less." Perhaps the page number could be reduced for students, yet the sense of a teach-down curriculum assumes the worst about students. I am convinced that students want teachers to expect the best about them. Even "the worst" students say they are capable of more. Teachers can enhance a classroom environment by having positive visions of their students that their students may not have yet of themselves. I invite future teachers to anticipate students' ability to find writing enjoyable and purposeful.

Conclusion

When all is said and done, teachers should consider: What makes sense? What works? And above all, what lasts? What I hope will last, through this writing-to-learn assignment, is the recognition that building literate communities fosters diverse content area learning for both preservice secondary content area teachers and their future students. I would like to think that preservice teacher booksmiths will pass on to their future students, this writing experience as one of many, to promote relevance, motivation and ownership in secondary content area learning.

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WHAT THEY KNOW AND BELIEVE ABOUT FAMILY LITERACY: PRESERVICE AND MENTOR TEACHERS RESPOND AND REFLECT

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Abstract

The authors examine family literacy awareness among preservice and mentor teachers in a professional development school setting. Believing the best milieu for developing literacy occurs when authentic, reciprocal relationships between home and school lead to valuing and building upon the literacy practices of both, these researchers sought to establish baseline data regarding the nature of family literacy knowledge and practices being observed by these preservice teachers. This article describes four phases of data collection and analysis, and the categories of family literacy awareness that emerged. Findings support the urgent need for family literacy inclusive teacher education programs.

A reciprocal alliance between home and school is increasingly believed to be vital to the success of educating children and developing literacy (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Morrow, 1995; Purcell-Gates, et. al, 1995; Sanders & Epstein, 1998; Scherer, 1998; Workman & Gage, 1997). Reciprocity between parents and teachers, parents and children, teachers and children, and the school and community is needed for the creation of the best possible milieu for literacy development. Children who arrive at school with rich literacy backgrounds and whose literacy learning from home is reinforced by appropriate classroom activities are most likely to become successful readers and writers (Morrow, 1995).

In recent years, various family literacy initiatives and programs have been developed in efforts to foster home-school connections, enable schools to build upon children's learning from home, and facilitate continuous learning for all (Auerbach, 1995; Benjamin & Lord, 1996; Morrow, 1995; Neuman, Caperelli, & Kee, 1998; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). However, many parent–school relationships or partnerships appear to remain at a *surface structure* level (Handel, 1999; Steinberg, 1996; Tenorio, 1995). While *surface structure* encounters between parents and the school, such as open houses, special events promoting or celebrating literacy, a rotating backpack of literacy activities to do at home, or activities requiring parents to read to or monitor their child's reading (e.g., by recording number of minutes read) can serve as useful starting points, a relationship that involves *deep structure* can only be developed over time. A deep structure relationship requires repeated encounters focused on a mutual goal or mission that results in each participant, the parent and the teacher, developing a rich understanding and respect for the background experiences, knowledge, insight, abilities, and potentialities of the other. Through repeated encounters between a parent and teacher as both work toward a shared goal, a reciprocal partnership based on awareness of the strengths and struggles of the other can come to light and a *deep structure* relationship grounded in trust can be developed. Deep structure relationships evolve from truly listening to what the other has to say and are what we mean by "reciprocal" partnerships between parents and the school.

As teacher educators in a year-long field-based teacher education program, the researchers in this study focused on the aspect of family literacy related to how families support young children's early literacy development. We believe that preservice teachers need the following: a) an understanding of the literacy existing and developing within the homes of their students, b) a valuing of the richness of the possibilities of learning with and from families, and c) the knowledge and skills necessary to create and sustain authentic parent-teacher partnerships. While recognition of the need for utilizing and building upon family literacy is gaining prominence, teacher candidates rarely receive formal education in working with parents, creating home-school partnerships or knowledge of family literacy programs and research (Evans, Dumas, & Weible, 1991; Galinsky, 1988; Greenberg, 1989). Therefore, this study sought to determine the nature of family literacy awareness currently existing among pre-service teachers and their mentor teachers in the professional development schools partnering with our university. In addition, we wished to glimpse into the experiences our students were having in observing or participating in literacy-oriented home-school partnerships in the field.

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Theoretical Framework

As first teachers, parents have great influence on the literacy learning of their children before and throughout children's school careers. Research has shown that children who are immersed in a rich literacy environment in the home are likely to become more successful as readers and writers (Strickland & Morrow, 1989; Taylor, 1983; Teale & Sulzby, 1989). In addition, literacy practices in the home are often different than traditional literacy practices in the classroom. Whereas home literacy events are usually purposeful and child-centered as well as holistic in nature, school literacy events may be whole group, fragmented, and teacher originated (Teale & Sulzby, 1989).

Teachers' beliefs about literacy and home experiences may affect the way they design instruction. For example, teachers who ascribe to a wealth model (Auerbach, 1989) may view the variety of literacy experiences children bring from their home experience as strengths on which to build future instruction. In contrast, teachers who ascribe to a deficit model may place little value on or have limited awareness of home literacy learning. The instruction these teachers design may not take into account what the children already know about print and language (Auerbach, 1989).

Schools or family literacy programs ascribing to a deficit view of literacy within families may also utilize a transmission or "one-directional" (from trainers to parents) approach to "teach" families how to do literacy activities traditionally used in the school setting. This approach often excludes the meshing and synthesizing of traditional school-like activities with the literacy events and practices already occurring within the home. Alternatively, schools that adopt a "wealth" view of immigrant, minority, or disadvantaged families may encourage teachers to connect classroom learning to the intact literacy patterns within children's homes, as existing literacy practices are thought to offer rich, although different, departure points (Auerbach, 1989).

While there is general consensus among parents and teachers that successful home school partnerships are beneficial to a child's education (Eldridge-Hunter, 1992; Heath & Thomas, 1984; Marcon, 1994; Rosenthal & Sawyers, 1996), neither group usually has the opportunity to experience authentic, "deeper-level" partnership relationships. Both parents and teachers must continually examine their preconceptions about the other and must go beyond traditional ideas of parent involvement in order to move toward reciprocal, respectful relationships in which equal decision-making responsibility exists (Grossman, 1999). Some parents may see their role in working with the school as needed only when problems arise, or may even harbor fears about schools and teachers (Barbour & Barbour, 1997; Handel, 1999). Some teachers may have biases and misinformation about such characteristics as socioeconomic status, race, religion, education or even level of caring and concern (Berger, 1991; Sturm, 1997). If teachers can begin to see that parents do care (Brewer, 1995), but have diverse ways and skills in demonstrating their caring (Greenberg, 1989), they can begin to design parent *partnering opportunities* that match families' needs and abilities (Davies, 1997).

The establishment of reciprocity seems to be an essential first step toward creating the kind of authentic relationships and partnerships desired. Neuman, Caperelli, and Kee (1998) have developed principles of successful family literacy programs from a study of family literacy participants. These principles include the following:

- Family literacy is not something that can be "done" to people.
- Family literacy is not changing people but offering choices and opportunities to families.
- Parents come with rich histories and experiences that should be honored and used in program development.
- Family literacy programs have both direct and indirect benefits.
- Family literacy learning is a matter of "small wins" (p. 250-251).

As the education community critically reflects upon new understandings about working with families and promoting literacy, the question of how to facilitate and scaffold preservice teachers' understandings of the diversity and complexities of working with families becomes crucial. It is important to focus on improving family literacy partnerships and including preservice teachers in this effort, because this has the potential to impact the teachers of both today and tomorrow.

Research Questions

This study examined the awareness of family literacy among preservice teachers and their mentor teachers. We also explored how preservice teachers described family literacy practices in a professional development school setting. Specifically, the research questions were: a)What is the nature of family literacy awareness among preservice teachers and their mentor teachers? and b)What activities do preservice teachers observe occurring within public school classrooms which they believe connect with literacy practices in the homes?

Methodology and Data Sources

From it's conception, foundational goals of our field-based professional development school have included a focus on level-ground collaboration, professional development of inservice teachers, and the enhancement of achievement for the K-12 public school students (Northeast Texas Center for Professional Development and Technology, 1994; 2000). The exploration of family literacy awareness reported here seeks to inform and support each of these goals. The methodology used built upon the open and on-going communication among all partners—mentors, university liaisons, and preservice teachers.

The researchers in this study were the university liaisons who instructed as well as supervised the preservice teachers in the field. Mentor teachers were elementary classroom teachers who volunteered to guide the preservice teachers as they developed beginning teaching skills in their mentors' classrooms. As these inservice teachers were asked to question and think about how they were supporting family literacy within their own classrooms, the expectation was that the literacy learning of K-12 students would be enhanced.

Data collection and analysis with twenty-three preservice teachers proceeded in four broad phases. In the first phase, the preservice teachers were asked to complete an open-ended questionnaire related to their understanding of family literacy. They wrote responses to three questions: 1) What do you think the term "family literacy" means? 2) With what efforts to facilitate or study family literacy are your familiar? and 3) What kinds of family literacy activities has your classroom or school promoted?

In the second phase the preservice teachers met with their mentors and posed the prompt "Tell me about one activity you did where you partnered with parents for the purpose of promoting literacy." Acting as scribes, the preservice teachers recorded the mentors' responses and collected volunteered documentation supplied by the mentors.

In the third phase, the preservice teachers wrote responses to two summative questions in a follow-up questionnaire: 1) Now that you have answered questions about family literacy, interviewed your mentors, and discussed possible activities with parents to support literacy learning, what do you know now that you didn't before regarding family literacy? 2) What questions do you have about literacy learning in a family setting?

The final phase of data collection involved gathering student lesson plans, reflection journal responses, and student portfolios. Field notes of any observed activities or conversations regarding family literacy awareness or activities among the preservice teachers, their mentors, and the professional development school were also included in the final data.

It is important to note that since our purpose was to collect baseline data, at no time in the course of this study were the preservice teachers given any direct instruction regarding family literacy. No suggestions to research family literacy or plan specific activities for their classrooms to promote family literacy were made.

The data from the written responses to the questionnaires, the interviews, and preservice student assignments were analyzed according to constant comparative methodology in order to determine categories of awareness of family literacy itself and of activities in the schools to promote literacy learning in the home (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Data were collected, read, and discussed between the researchers in a recursive manner as the phases of the study progressed. These data were triangulated with the field notes and the student documentation described above to give credibility to the information students reported (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Findings

Phase I: Preservice Teachers' Awareness and Observation of Family Literacy Activities

Phase I focused on what the preservice teachers perceived regarding family literacy and what they observed happening in elementary classrooms to foster family literacy. Several categories of awareness emerged from the data and are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Phase I Questionnaire: Categories of Preservice Teachers' Initial Awareness of Family Literacy

Issue	Data Categories
What family literacy means?	Literacy levels (24%) Genre of literature (12%) Families reading together (18%) Families learning together (24%) Developing communication (12%) Developing home/school connections (12%)
Familiarity with family literacy efforts or studies?	None (34%) Research (6%) Family communication (34%) School initiated literacy activity (34%) Adult literacy education (6%) Family Genre Literature (6%)
Family literacy activities observed being promoted in school?	Organized events (35%) Family reading and writing (24%) Facilitating homework (12%) Parent involvement at school (12%) Studying family literature genre (12%) Appreciation of family (6%)

Note. Parentheses denote rounded percentages of total responses among the categories for each issue. Total % > 100%.

When asked what they thought the term "family literacy" meant, preservice teachers responded with a range of comments showing limited awareness to a more complex understanding of the involvement of the whole family in literacy learning. Following are some typical responses for the categories regarding what the preservice teachers believed family literacy involved.

What the Term Family Literacy Meant. Four students wrote that the term referred to literacy levels. One student wrote "Reading and writing abilities—or level—of the entire family, not just the children." Another wrote: "I think the term 'family literacy' might be connected to the reading fluency of the family." Two student responses attached the meaning of 'family literacy' to a genre of literature. For example, one wrote: "Family literacy might suggest a group of literature that deals with the same topic." Seven students wrote that the term meant families who read and learn together. These responses included, "When the whole family is involved in the process of reading—sharing books with your child, reading together as a family, parents modeling reading," and ". . . the family works together on becoming more literate. They study, read, and do homework together. The family is continually learning."

Two students viewed family literacy as developing communication within the family while two other students saw it as becoming involved in the school classroom. For example, one stated that family literacy meant ". . . the ability to communicate with your family. Different families communicate in different ways. Some families are close to one another and others are not." For another, family literacy meant, " . . . involving the home in the reading/writing classroom."

Overall, then, it seemed that these preservice teachers generally had both limited and diverse understandings of family literacy.

Familiarity with Family Literacy Efforts or Studies. Six preservice teachers had never heard of any programs or studies regarding family literacy. For some, this was the first time they had ever seen the phrase "family literacy." Not knowing the nomenclature was a problem for another; "I don't know of any, or if I do I did not know what it was called."

One preservice teacher related some knowledge of emergent literacy research: "I am familiar with the research that supports reading to a child at an early age. The child will be a 'better' reader and more eager to learn if they are already familiar with print and have seen the role it plays in everyday life."

Some preservice teachers viewed family literacy as something that has to do with both reading and communication. For example, one commented: ". . . children learn by example and if Mom & Dad don't read or communicate well or at least emphasize the need for literacy the child will not think it is that important."

Another preservice teacher believed that a close family who communicates well facilitates family literacy.

Six preservice teachers explained family literacy as school-initiated family literacy activities. The activities they described included whole-school initiatives as well as teacher-to-parents activities. School initiatives also included "sending books home with the children to share with the entire family," "the 600 minute Reading Club," and "sending letters home to let families know their children will be bringing home different things to do with a parent or older siblings." One student wrote about what her mentor did, as follows: "I have experienced a mentor teacher who really tries to get students and parents involved in reading. She sends home a calendar each month to have parents and students write down the books they read together."

Another preservice teacher was familiar with adult literacy education that included "teaching adults to read." For yet another preservice teacher, it seemed that facilitating family literacy meant studying literacy genres. She wrote that family literacy related to ". . . study[ing] themes and then [locating] different stories [for] those themes (folktales, fairytales, etc.)."

Family Literacy Activities in School. The last question asked of the students during the first phase of the study was "What kinds of family literacy activities have been promoted by your classroom or school?" Categories of responses included organized family reading events, homework facilitation and similar parent involvement, as well as studying a genre of literature and overall appreciation of family. Reading is Fundamental (RIF) and a Dr. Seuss Birthday Party were each mentioned twice. Other popular organized programs were "600 minute Reading Club," "Read Across America," and the "Accelerated Reading (AR) reading program." Book fairs were listed as family literacy activities promoted by the school.

Encouraging shared family reading and writing time seemed to be something these preservice teachers noted as happening in their mentors' classrooms. One wrote, "They stress the students going home and letting parents know what they are reading. They want students to talk about their reading at home." Another wrote of encouraging family writing together: "My mentor sends home a picture every two weeks. The child and their parents are to write a story *together* about the picture."

Helping their children with homework and coming to the school to help in the classroom were two other categories of family literacy activities the preservice teachers saw promoted by the schools. One wrote that family literacy activities might be: "A parent program that teaches parents methods that are used in the classroom that they can use at home. Then sending something home with the student every night to do." Another wrote that family literacy activities promoted by the school included "involv[ing] the parents working with their children on their homework."

Students also mentioned bringing parents into the school, for example, by "asking family volunteers to come and read to the class." Implying that her school was not promoting family literacy, another wrote, "If it [family literacy] means family involvement, then I have seen none taking place up to this point."

One preservice teacher may have viewed her school's promotion of family literacy as positive promotion of families themselves. She wrote, "an overall appreciation of your beliefs and background. Be thankful towards your family and what it means to you."

Phase II: Mentor Teachers Share What They Did to Promote Family Literacy

The research questions in this study related to both the mentor teachers' and the preservice teachers' awareness of family literacy. By asking mentors to discuss one activity they did to promote family literacy with their preservice teachers, it was hoped that information regarding some of their awareness of and importance placed on parent involvement in literacy learning might be gleaned. Table 2 provides categories of activities the mentors shared.

Table 2. Phase II: Categories of Activities Mentors Shared Regarding Promoting Family Literacy as Reported by the Preservice Teachers

Organized family literacy events at school (31%)
On-going family literacy activities (19%)
Activities to involve parents in the classroom (19%)
Parent help solicited for individual student needs (31%)
Family literacy activity planned jointly by preservice and mentor teacher (6%)
Parents operating a Family Literacy Center (6%)
No family literacy activities (6%)

Note. Parentheses denote rounded percentages of total responses for each category. Total % > 100%.

Mentors' Knowledge and Actions Related to Family Literacy. In the second phase of the study, the preservice teachers interviewed their mentors. The interviews elicited descriptions of a variety of ways mentors facilitated family literacy activities in their classrooms.

Some reported engaging in organized events at school such as "Dr. Seuss Birthday Party," "Family Math Night," "RIF Day," and "600 minutes." Others talked about engaging in on-going family literacy activities such as family writing time.

Another on-going activity was described as "Parents . . . having the child spend time reading aloud to them at home each night . . . Take-home stories are sent home each week. . . ." Another teacher sent home "articles for the parents to read with their child to help get them involved in the learning process."

One mentor responded that family literacy included encouraging family involvement in the school. The preservice teacher noted that in this classroom, "students read individually or to a parent." Along with parent involvement in the classroom, several mentors solicited help from parents for individual student needs through homework and assignments or reading with children who were below grade level. One mentor reported a unique response to soliciting parents to read with their children.

> One student was having difficulty getting her parents' time so she was taping her [self] reading. The mother would listen to it on the way to work and then they could talk about the reading later.

Another mentor, a music teacher, explained to her preservice teacher that she really did nothing to encourage family literacy. "She told me that she had thought about it and she could not recall one time she had a talk with a parent about literacy; that this is not what she 'is into.'"

Lastly, one preservice teacher reported doing a joint family literacy activity with her mentor teacher. She included a copy of a letter to the parents along with her written narrative of the activity.

> . . . Ms. and I are inviting your child to share his/her favorite poem or song by reading it to the class. This exercise through the partnership of you and your child should produce an interesting family literacy experience . . .

Apparently, the students and parents responded well to this request, because the preservice teacher incorporated the activity into her lesson plans.

Phase III: Preservice Teachers Developing Awareness of Family Literacy

Though no formal discussions occurred in education classrooms regarding family literacy, the researchers continued questioning the preservice teachers regarding their understandings of family literacy. The categories of responses to questions in Phase III follow.

Table 3. Phase III: Categories of Preservice Teacher's New Awareness About Family Literacy

Issue	Data Categories
What was learned?	Partnership of home and school (12%)
	Affects learning (18%)
	Nature of parent involvement (12%)
	School's responsibility to foster family Literacy (24%)
	Ways to promote family literacy (24%)
	Limited knowledge (12%)
New questions?	None (29%)
	Ways to promote family literacy? (24%)
	How to involve "illiterate" parents? (24%)
	Eliciting cooperation of parents? (19%)

Note. Parentheses denote rounded percentages of total responses for each category. Total % > 100%.

What the Preservice Teachers Learned About Family Literacy. We wondered whether the preservice teachers learned anything about family literacy from responding to the initial questions and interviewing their mentors. Therefore, we implemented a third phase where we asked that they write about what they may have learned from these experiences. In addition, we asked them if they had any new questions regarding family literacy.

Two students said they learned that the family has an effect on literacy learning. One wrote, "Now I know it means to involve the whole family in the learning process . . ." Another wrote,

> I know now that it is very important for the whole family to be involved in the literacy development of children. It's almost certain in my mind that families that do not read to or with their children are going to have problems in the area of reading. This then will affect every child's learning.

It should be mentioned that the above quote could indicate that the student is operating from a "deficit" view of families or has over-generalized the effect of parents not reading to or with their child. While having a parent who reads to or with a child is certainly an advantage, it is not universally true that the absence of this practice in the home will lead to reading difficulties.

In a similar vein, other preservice teachers viewed family literacy as the home influencing learning through a partnership with the school. A typical response in this category was, ". . . I never realized how much the parent, child, school relationship affects learning." One preservice teacher viewed family literacy as "a team effort" with the school. In the following response, the student attempted to describe how the partnership between home and school works:

> Family literacy is a partnership experience created between parents and children and the school . . . It reveals how parents' involvement in a child's literacy experience affects a child's learning which helps the teacher communicate with the parents and their children.

Two preservice teachers said they learned more about the nature of parent involvement from interviewing their mentors. One indicated surprise:

> I realized that several parents actually do sit down with their children and read with them and try to help with their reading, vocabulary, pronunciation. I didn't think that too may parents did that, but they do; the ones that really do care about their child's education.

Again, the final segment of this last statement, "the ones that really do care about their child's education," may be indicative of the kind of misconception or over-generalization that many novices make as they begin to think about the role or in this case the level of concern of parents. Those educators ascribing to the "wealth" view of families would not automatically conclude that not sitting down to help a child read means a lack of caring.

The second student said that what she learned about parental involvement confirmed what she previously believed:

> Sometimes it's very hard to get parents to participate. Usually it's the better students that have parental support. I already knew this. It just backed up my prior beliefs.

Several students wrote that they learned many ways to promote family literacy in the classroom. Their comments appeared to indicate that they believed promoting family literacy was a responsibility of the school. A typical response in this category was: "Schools can promote family literacy through fairly simple activities." Activities mentioned included: "contact with parents, teachers, & students; timed reading programs that involve parents, etc.," "[children] asking parents to listen to them read . . . looking over and checking their homework."

An example of a response showing that schools should take the lead in promoting family literacy follows:

> The problem is that parents don't know what to do. I believe that teachers need to inform parents of ways to help their children at home.

Similarly,

> Family literacy is not a priority at [School District] . . . I believe that some of the parents will respond in helping promote literacy for their child, if need be indicated. I feel more family literacy should be pushed because parents who feel literacy is important have children who feel literacy is important.

Most preservice teachers responded positively regarding the importance of family literacy in the successful learning of elementary students. However, two students expressed limited knowledge of the subject even after answering questions and interviewing their mentors. One wrote, "I didn't know what family literacy was. Now I have an idea but, I find it still somewhat confusing." The second preservice teacher, while admitting limited knowledge, also wrote:

> There is not a lot of information known about family literacy among the people I talked to. I do realize that the subject is not talked about or used much in the classrooms. I myself believe that there should be more parent involvement with the student to earn better grades in school.

New Questions About Family Literacy. The last question during the third phase was "Do you have any new questions about family literacy?" Six responded that they did not. Five preservice teachers wanted to know more ways to promote family literacy. One student wrote of wanting to know "different ways besides just reading to kids at home to increase family literacy."

Five preservice teachers questioned how to involve parents who are not literate, who may be uncooperative, or may be uninformed. For example, one asked, "How do you begin to promote family literacy in a family who seems to see no value in literacy at all?" Similar responses were, "What are different ways to encourage family literacy in a dysfunctional family?" and "What do you say or do if the parents are not literate in any way and they can't help their child? Or they don't understand?" This comment also appeared on the final question: "If the parents don't know the basic rules of phonics and reading, then how are the parents supposed to help their children?"

Lastly, four preservice teachers had questions about how to involve the parents in the school. "[Elementary School] has a family literacy night. How do you get families to understand the importance of this and to get involved?" Another preservice teacher wanted "more parents to participate in these school functions." One specifically wanted to know how to get the parents to agree with her: "How would [I] explain to a parent that my reading procedure will benefit the students? What if they still disagree with [me]?" Finally, one preservice teacher was passionate about involving parents. "How do you get them involved in promoting literacy for the student?"

Phase IV: Integrating Family Literacy in Teaching and Reflecting

The fourth phase generated very little in the way of substantive reference to promoting family literacy or developing awareness of the role the family plays in literacy learning for students. Notes of conversations with preservice teachers and mentors showed no references to family literacy or involving parents with literacy learning. These notes revealed the primary focus was on what was happening in the schools and in the classroom instructional settings. Preservice teachers' reflection journals and lesson plans indicated activities designed for learning in school only. With the exception of the one pre-service teacher who designed a family literacy activity under the guidance of her mentor, no preservice teacher incorporated reading and writing activities for the whole family in lesson planning. The occasional mention of eliciting parental support centered on improving behavior rather than academic learning.

Discussion

Data sources within each of the phases of this study reflected students' and mentor teachers' limited awareness of the full extent of possibilities of family-school partnerships for supporting literacy development. Both preservice and mentor teachers demonstrated a vague sense of the valuing of family literacy efforts as "something they should be doing;" but also made statements indicative of the deficit view of literacy within families and *surface level* models of partnering.

The primary limitation of this study was the self-reported data from the preservice teachers. The written responses of the questionnaires were generated from their own prior knowledge and whatever they could learn from interviewing their mentors. And, as mentioned earlier, these preservice teachers did not receive formal instruction related to family literacy during either semester of their field experience.

Responses to questions in Phase I indicated that the preservice teachers had limited awareness of family literacy. When they were asked what the term "family literacy" meant, responses included literacy levels of the family, studying folk genre and literature, and positive communication among family members. While some understood the term to mean families reading and learning together, others saw family literacy as being positively connected to the home/school environment. However limited the preservice teachers' understanding of the term may be, however, it was evident that most understood the importance of the family to learning.

Over twenty preservice teachers were queried in Phase I. Most of them had no awareness of programs or research regarding family literacy. When asked about family literacy activities promoted by the school, the most common response related to organized events such as RIF and family events sponsored by the individual schools. The next most frequently mentioned activity was "sending books home with the children." Some familiarity with school-initiated outreach to families appeared to be their only awareness of the dynamics of family literacy and positive home-school connections.

In Phase 2, eleven mentor teachers responded through interviews regarding what they did in their schools or classrooms to promote family literacy. Their responses were consistent with the preservice teachers' perceptions and revealed many efforts and special events, such as the 600 Minute Reading Club, that encourages children to read at home, as well as various opportunities for parents to be involved in the classroom. While the activities mentioned appear worthwhile, none seemed to have reached the level of reciprocity capable of providing the sustained collaboration that could lead to a *deep structure* relationship and insights about the functional uses of literacy within the family. True, on-going relationships can lead to this kind of knowledge and should include understanding of both the efferent (the actual activities or events) and aesthetic (the socio-contextual and affective components) stances (Rosenblatt, 1978) of literacy experiences of the families.

Perhaps the most salient finding of this study was that the process of responding to the family literacy questionnaire and of interviewing their mentor teachers seemed to have increased the preservice teachers' awareness of the need for pursuing information about family literacy. Their new questions regarding family literacy were more sophisticated than their lists of activities in Phase I. By the end of the study, many preservice teachers were more curious about establishing partnerships between home and school. Moreover, the notion that they could be proactive in creating this partnership seems to have been planted.

Increased awareness and more proactive teachers would fall into the category or principle of "small steps" toward the goal of reciprocal relationships and a "wealth" hypothesis of families and the literacy opportunities, experiences, and practices they bring to the table. The larger task for teacher educators is how to help teachers move beyond the "deficit" view of literacy in families. In addition, teacher educators must help teachers move beyond the narrow strand of family literacy, such as storybook reading or special events, they often promote.

The question for teacher educators is how to design curriculum that helps teachers acknowledge and build upon the literacy experiences and practices already existent in the families of the children they teach. Based on these findings, our implications for practice focus on creating the kind of context within our teacher education program that nourishes the paradigmatic shift in perspective we believe to be vital. Namely, as stated by Neuman, Caperelli, and Kee (1998, p.250), we agree that " family literacy is not something that can be 'done' to people." It is our goal to design experiences that allow our students to begin to know parents as people, with the same basic needs and feelings as themselves. Our students need opportunities to celebrate diversities and to engage in activities that create authentic encounters with families and parents in order to begin to see the strengths and "literacy capital" the families do have. They need examples and scaffolding in how to truly listen to parents so that the partnership becomes reciprocal, a "we" rather than an "us-them" paradigm.

In addition, if the goal is listening in order to create a "we" mindset and then increase literacy together, efforts must focus on a creating a variety of choices and opportunities for family and parent participation and partnership. While some parents can be at the school to participate frequently, others will rarely be able to do so. This should not mean that those unable to physically be at school can't be or feel connected and involved. We must look for other ways. The telephone, dialogue journals between teachers and parents, and meetings at convenient and alternative times are options. Family field trips, sometimes on weekends or evenings, provide another potentially rich possibility for interaction and exchange

We believe the best answers and best approaches for partnership are likely to come from the families. However, this can't happen without opportunities to talk. Family meetings that offer all parents the opportunity to attend and place items on the agenda is one vehicle for beginning true communication. This practice would support another of Neuman, Caperelli, and

Kee's (1998) principles, that "Parents come with rich histories and experiences that should be honored and used in program development" (p. 250). In our experience, once parents experience acceptance and find that their ideas are listened to and acted upon, the reciprocal relationship and trust-building will be off and running.

Our speculation is that neither teacher educators nor classroom teachers will ever be able to state exactly how to create family literacy partnerships in all circumstances. But once our collective paradigm shifts to seeing the effort as something we build together, one step at a time, we feel a dynamic and powerful change will occur.

Within our own teacher education program, we are planning to incorporate seminar sessions that simulate family meeting experiences. We also plan to include collaborative reflection upon articles and narratives that provide examples of authentic encounters and exchanges of ideas with parents. In addition, we will use more prompting questions related to parents' roles, needs, ideas, and participation in their child's education for students to reflect on in response journals related to their field experiences. We also plan to involve our preservice teachers and mentor teachers in analysis of future data of this kind in order to provide opportunities for reflection about these issues and to serve as another provocation for contemplation of how to build reciprocal relationships.

Future Directions

Our research of preservice teachers' current awareness of family literacy has left us with several new questions which we believe could be helpful for other teacher educators seeking to design curriculum and instruction inclusive of a family literacy component. These questions will guide our next research efforts and our design of instructional strategies and experiences for our classes and seminars with our preservice teachers. They are:

- How do we design instructional experiences inclusive of the current knowledge and research of successful family literacy practices in order to promote paradigmatic shifts in thinking that are more aligned with a "*wealth*" view of families?
- How can we design experiences to develop preservice teachers' knowledge and skills in developing authentic partnerships that go beyond a *surface structure level* with parents, families, and the community?
- How can we design a teacher education program that supports mentor teachers' development of knowledge and skills in this area and provides consistency between our research-based beliefs and practice?
- How do we establish and maintain a mindset of "small wins" for our

students and ourselves in order to assure that we continue to make progress and move forward over the long haul?

Our work with preservice teachers has assured us that they are aware of practices such as shared reading experiences, writing for enjoyment and expression, and strategic problem-solving, that can be shared with parents, the first teachers, in fostering the literacy development of children. Our work has led us to more emphasis on helping these fledging teachers recognize the value, hope, and support possible when school instruction emulates and builds upon successful home literacy practices and when the goal for parent involvement is one of reciprocity of relationships, respect, ideas, questions and practices.

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CONSTRUCTIVE COMPREHENSION AND METACOGNITIVE STRATEGY INSTRUCTION IN A FIELD-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study was to examine the impact of constructive comprehension and metacognitive strategy instruction on preservice teachers' beliefs during a course designed to promote reflective thinking about instructional practices. The researcher used qualitative methodology to analyze preservice teachers' dialogue journals, open-ended surveys, and reflective essays. Results showed that the students planned to use constructive comprehension and metacognitive strategy instruction to utilize effective instructional techniques, create student-centered classrooms, maximize learning potential, and meet individual needs.

> "The aim of education should be to teach us rather how to think, than what to think—rather to improve our minds, so as to enable us to think for ourselves, than to load our memories with the thoughts of others."
>
> —James Beattie

Educational research on teaching and learning has experienced a shift from investigating teacher behaviors to examining teachers' cognitive thought processes, specifically, attitudes and beliefs (Doyle, 1997; Richardson, 1996). Examination of the research literature reveals an incongruency in researchers' opinions about the ability to change preservice and inservice teachers' beliefs and behaviors (Richardson, 1996). Some hold that teacher beliefs are difficult if not impossible to change (Cochran-Smith, 1991), while others

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contend that change can occur in programs which model constructive teaching and reflective practice (Richardson, 1996). The importance of teacher change has been summarized by Wells (1994), who stated: ". . . Change in teachers is now recognized to be the prerequisite for bringing about educational change" (p. 23).

Review of Literature

Impact of Theoretical Beliefs on Classroom Instructional Behaviors

When preservice teachers enter college, they bring baggage with them in terms of prior educational beliefs (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Doyle, 1997; Maxson & Sindelar, 1998). These beliefs have been found to stem from personal experience (Clandinin, 1986), experience with schooling and instruction (Anning, 1988; Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Lortie, 1975), and experience with formal knowledge (Clark, 1988; Crow a & b, 1987). Such beliefs are related to students, schooling, learning, and teaching (Lortie, 1975) and may exhibit great influence on the content preservice teachers learn in their preprofessional education (Hollingsworth, 1989; Maxson & Sindelar, 1998). Beliefs also provide a foundation for teaching behavior (Maxson & Sindelar, 1998; Nespor, 1987; Peck & Tucker, 1973; Richardson, 1996). Pajares (1992) suggests that teacher beliefs may strongly impact perceptions and judgments; this impact, consequently, may influence classroom instructional behaviors.

Effecting Change in Preservice Teachers' Theoretical Beliefs

Examination of preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs is critical because it leads to an understanding of teachers' cognitive processes and instructional behaviors, teacher change, and learning to teach (Richardson, 1996). Once beliefs are grounded, they are often difficult to change (Doyle, 1997; Goodlad, 1990; Pajares, 1992). In addition, the older the belief, the more difficult it is to change (Cochran-Smith, 1991). Once preservice teachers' beliefs are solidified, they may be unwilling to dispel these beliefs even if research shows them to be faulty (Pajares, 1992). Some studies have shown that for one to consider disposing of a belief, he or she must experience dissonance—cognitive, affective, or otherwise—that prevents the concept from being assimilated (Pajares, 1992). Thus, for change to occur, the drive must be intrinsic rather than extrinsic.

To effect change, teacher educators must examine preservice teachers' beliefs in order to assess how their beliefs relate to educational research. Appropriate class activities and reflective assignments that encourage the preservice teachers to confront existing instructional beliefs help them to begin to make an internal shift to a belief system grounded in research (Green, 1971). Further, teacher education programs that are constructivist in nature may be able to facilitate preservice teachers' process of developing research-based beliefs (Richardson, 1996).

Constructive Comprehension and Metacognitive Strategy Instruction

One intervention that can be implemented to support weak readers and to facilitate independent reading is the use of constructive comprehension and metacognitive strategy instruction (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Flavell, 1976; Smith, 1975; Smith, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978). Such instruction involves students in constructing their own knowledge (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978), bringing meaning to text (Smith, 1997), and self-monitoring their understanding (Flavell, 1976). As a result, students learn to interact/transact with text and regulate their own learning (Rosenblatt, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978). They begin to take ownership as they realize that knowledge is not a fixture in their environment waiting to be absorbed. In a constructive environment in which students employ metacognitive strategies in which they learn how to learn, teachers can meet individual needs, while facilitating learning processes as needed (Flavell, 1976).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study, one facet of a larger investigation, was to examine the impact of constructive comprehension and metacognitive strategy instruction on preservice teachers' beliefs in a course designed to promote reflective thinking about instructional practices. The overarching research question that guides this ongoing investigation is: How does participating in a constructive comprehension and metacognitive strategy instruction course impact preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning?

Methodology

This descriptive case employed qualitative methodology within a case study design. The thick, rich description associated with qualitative research can provide a holistic picture of the environment, the participants, and their behavior (Merriam, 1998). In addition, a number of studies using qualitative methodologies have recently been conducted to examine teacher beliefs (Richardson, 1996). The goal of these studies, as well as this ongoing study, is to understand the teachers' thinking processes and perspectives rather than to predict future behavior

Setting

The investigation was implemented in a rural, southwestern university in an undergraduate course entitled "Comprehension and Literacy." Major course topics included learning to read, reading to learn, basal reading series and trade books, integrating the language arts, and formal and informal assessment. Students were involved in (a) reading two texts, (b) completing five dialogue journal entries, (c) evaluating a basal reading series, (d) constructing an integrated lesson plan, (e) completing an action research project, (f) taking two exams, and (g) constructing a portfolio.

Participant Selection and Description

The participant pool included all students enrolled in one section of the course in the spring 1999 semester, with N= 28. There were 26 females and two males. The students ranged in age from 20 to 52 years of age; most ranged from 20 to 25 years. Twenty-five students were first-time undergraduate degree seekers, while 3 already held bachelor's degrees.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected in a variety of formats to allow for triangulation (Stake, 1995). Data source triangulation involved examining the phenomena in a variety of contexts (dialogue journals, open-ended surveys, and reflective essays) to check for congruency (Denzin, 1994). Investigator triangulation was accomplished by having an external researcher examine the data and coding procedures to check for congruency.

Aware of the potential for role conflicts, the researcher attempted to protect the validity of the study by having students sign consent forms at the beginning of the semester. Further, the students were made aware that their journal entries would be collected as data for the study. Students were guaranteed anonymity and were given choice in whether to participate. Finally, they were assured that their grades would not be affected should they choose not to participate.

The data were analyzed using the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis (Glaser, 1968/1994). In this process, the researcher engaged in simultaneous collecting, coding, and analyzing of data. This method was implemented in four stages: (a) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (b) integrating categories and their properties, (c) delimiting the information, and (d) writing the product. In the first stage, the researcher coded the data according to categories as they emerged then shared the categories with an external researcher. To establish inter-rater reliability, the researcher shared the data and working list of categories with an external researcher who then coded the field notes using the categories; the two researchers then examined for consistency in analysis. The process continued until the researchers reached at least 90% agreement on data coding. In the second stage, the researcher compared incidents to determine how they related to one another. In the third stage, the researcher compared incidents and categories to integrate related information and delete irrelevant data. This was done until the categories were saturated. Finally, in the fourth stage, the researcher used the data, coding schemes, and categories to formulate overarching themes.

First, data were analyzed within each source: dialogue journals, open-ended surveys, and reflective essays. Then, the researcher conducted cross-source analysis. Categories constructed for each of the data sources were then compared to the categories generated for the other sources. This enabled the researcher to examine for congruency of the phenomena across contexts.

The research question the author sought to answer was: How does participating in a constructive comprehension and metacognitive strategy instruction course impact preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning? While data were collected throughout the semester, data that will be reported on in this article have been limited to an open-ended survey, two dialogue journal entries, and one reflective essay.

Results

Survey responses

The students completed surveys on the last day of class to reflect on their course experiences. The survey's four prompts are listed below with related results.

Question 1: With Which Comprehension Strategies are You Familiar?

The students engaged in constructive, metacognitve strategy activities each class period with both expository and narrative texts. During the semester, the students experimented with a sum of 19 strategies (See Appendix A). The researcher asked the first question on the survey to gain insight concerning the number of strategies the students retained. Results showed that 69% of the class remembered at least eight of the strategies. The three strategies that were listed most often were Venn diagrams, story maps, and K-W-L charts (Ogle, 1986). The three strategies that were least retained were Insert, [a variation of Self-Monitoring Approach to Reading and Thinking (SMART) (Vaughan & Estes, 1986)], and setting bookmarks.

Question 2: Which Comprehension Strategies Do You Plan to Use During Your Internship and Residency [Student Teaching Semesters]?

Twelve students indicated they planned to use all the strategies. The three most popular strategies were concept squares (Vaughan & Estes, 1986), Venn diagrams, and flip charts. The three strategies that were listed the least number of times were Sketch to Stretch (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996), circle bookmarks, and cubing (Vaughan & Estes, 1986).

Question 3: In Your Own Words, Tell Me What You Think A Constructivist Teacher Is.

Analyzing the data, two overarching themes emerged: student-centered classrooms and effective instruction.

Student-Centered Classrooms. Most of the students indicated that constructivist teachers design student-centered classrooms in which children are free to construct knowledge while engaging in hands-on/discovery activities. Laurie shared, "This is a teacher who lets her students construct their own knowledge, . . . gives her students hands-on activities that relate to their real-life experiences, . . . and serves as a facilitator."

Shannon revealed, "A constructivist teacher designs the lessons around the student instead of expecting the students to conform to the lessons."

Effective Instruction. The students also exhibited strong beliefs concerning effective instruction. Such concepts as cooperative grouping and higher order thinking were frequently mentioned. Michelle wrote, "A constructivist teacher allows [students] to use higher order thinking skills."

Jamie added, "The teacher allows the students to sit in clusters so that they can learn from each other in a risk-free environment."

Tanya explained, "The teacher uses strategies that the student can use to make connections from the classroom to the real world."

Question 4: How Will You be a Constructivist Teacher During Your Internship and Residency [Student Teaching Semesters]?

Again, two overarching themes emerged: student-centered/constructivism and effective instruction. The subcategories that developed, however, were somewhat different.

Student-Centered Classrooms. Not only did the students plan to incorporate hands-on activities that would allow their students to construct knowledge, they also spoke of comprehension strategies, inquiry-based learning, and manipulatives. Kim offered, "I will use comprehension strategies so my students can regulate their own learning without my having to tell them everything. They'll have a lot of strategies to choose from so they can work according to their learning styles."

Kelley added, "I will provide activities such that students will inquire, investigate, and discover the unknown and draw inferences from it."

Jeanette explained, "I want a room full of manipulatives, and I don't want desks."

Effective Instruction. Cooperative grouping and children's literature surfaced as components of effective instruction; students also shared the importance of the arts. For example, Christine wrote,

> I will let my students work in small groups. When students work together, it prepares them for the workforce. If they don't learn how to

> solve problems cooperatively now, when will they learn? I'll also be able to individualize instruction by having lots of trade books in the classroom. That way they can research in-depth what we're learning in class, and they can spark their own interests.

Betsey explained, "I will integrate children's literature and the arts into my lessons each day. Some kids aren't exposed to the arts at home, and what I teach them may be the only things they learn about art, music, and drama all year."

Journals and Reflective Essays

The dialogue entries described here include one assigned the first day of the semester and one assigned at the conclusion of the course. The first entry's prompt was: "Discuss your attitudes and beliefs about teaching reading." The final entry's prompt was: "Tell me what you feel are the most important things you learned in this course." A reflective essay was also analyzed. The reflective essay's prompt was, "How can we use trade books to teach?"

While analyzing the journal entries and reflective essays, three overarching themes emerged: (a) reading instructional practices, (b) effective instructional practices, and (c) student-centered/constructivism.

Reading Instructional Practices. At the beginning of the semester, most of the students' comments and questions were concerned with teaching reading. Two subcategories within this classification included accommodating the spectrum of reading and learning abilities within a classroom and concerns about the role of phonics in a whole language classroom.

Reading Abilities. The subject of reading abilities received more attention than any other subcategory in the first journal reflection. The preservice teachers shared concerns about their future students' home lives, aware that their students' abilities would depend, in part, on their home environment and experiences. Laurie shared, "I had hundreds of books growing up, and my parents read to me all the time. I must remember that every student does not or has not had this advantage."

Melissa revealed, "Every child will be on a different level. It will be a challenge for me to learn to teach accordingly."

Several students discussed a relationship between reading ability and other curricular areas. Lee wrote, "In order for a student to be successful in any subject [he or she] must be able to read, comprehend, and communicate information."

Shannon concluded, "Reading is an essential part of everyday life."

Whole Language and Phonics. Students were also concerned with the relationship between whole language and phonics. There seemed to be a tendency for some students to believe they must use one or the other exclusively to teach reading. For example, Jenna wrote, "I will not be a whole language teacher. Without phonics, how will my students learn to read?" Jennifer, however, stated that she planned to teach phonics in context: "Trade books are a meaningful way to teach phonics. As the words are [read] in context, children begin to understand the ideas about letter/sound [relationships]."

Effective Teaching Practices. The second theme was effective teaching practices. Two primary subcategories of this theme emerged, including making instruction relevant to students' lives and capitalizing on students' schema.

Relevancy. A number of students discussed the need to make instruction relevant to their children's lives. Tina wrote, "Too often, children don't make connections between what they're learning in school and their everyday lives. Teachers need to point these out."

Lisa added a diversity component, "We must remember to use multicultural children's literature. Students from minority cultures feel left out when their teachers read nothing but books about blue-eyed blonde families."

Schema. The concept of schema was also a popular topic in the initial journals. Mandy wrote, "I won't just jump right into a lesson without focusing my kids. I have to find out what they already know about a subject before I can know what I need to teach them."

Jennifer added diversity concerns, "Not all my students will have had the same background knowledge. If they have no knowledge of a particular topic, I will have to provide experiences and activities that will build background knowledge for them."

Megan stated that she would teach comprehension strategies with trade books:

> Teachers could start with the brainstorming . . . strategy to get the children focused and [then] build on background knowledge. Then, they could do a K-W-L followed by the textbook details. Next, some trade books could be brought into the picture to help students relate their knowledge to the information printed in front of them.

Student-Centered/Constructivist Philosophy. Subcategories in the student-centered/constructivist philosophy included the role of teacher as facilitator, the importance of addressing individual learning styles, and the benefits of cooperative grouping.

Betsey shared, "I believe the children should do most of the talking. They would get bored hearing my voice all day."

Christine added, "I will take the role of facilitator, letting the students construct their own knowledge. That way, they're more likely to remember what they learn. Besides, learning is doing."

Learning Styles/Multiple Intelligences. Learning styles and multiple intelligences received the most attention in this theme. Jayne noted, "Every student in my classroom will learn differently. My lesson plans will have to reflect all learning styles."

Lisa was a steadfast proponent of Gardner's (1993) work: "People don't all learn the same way. Some students are good at music while others are good in math. My kids will be allowed to show their knowledge using areas where they are strong."

Cooperative Grouping. Several students wrote of the importance of cooperative grouping and Vygotsky's concept of peer assistance/scaffolding. Tanya disclosed, "I want my students to know I don't have all the answers. They will work in groups and benefit from peer assistance."

Melissa added, "I hope my students' desks are light, that way we can move them around and do a lot of group work."

Limitations

This study was implemented with several limitations. These included a) that the preservice teachers were involved in experiences external to the study that may have impacted their beliefs and b) that the preservice teachers' may have made statements to meet the researcher's expectations, especially since the researcher was their course instructor. In addition, data cannot be generalized since these participants' theoretical beliefs may be atypical of all classroom teachers.

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of constructive comprehension and metacognitive strategy instruction on preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning in a course designed to promote reflective thinking about instructional practices.

At the beginning of the semester, the students seemed to be most concerned with reading instruction. They worried about the role of phonics in learning to teach, and they fretted about how they could possibly teach a classroom of students on different levels with varying needs. They also experienced conflict with the issue of having students read aloud.

As the semester progressed, data indicated that students became more focused on instructional interventions that would aid not only their future students' reading abilities, but also their potential for learning other curricular content, and, eventually, their adult success. Coming into this course, students were cognizant of the challenge that would soon face them: accountability for meeting individual needs. Later in the course, many began to indicate that they believed that using constructive comprehension and metacogntive strategy instruction could empower them to celebrate their students' diversity rather than feeling anxious about it. The preservice teachers also indicated they would provide their students with opportunities to engage in hands-on learning in which they could develop their schema to connect the new to the familiar. They also planned to use children's literature to motivate students and encourage them to delve more deeply into subjects in which they developed a particular interest.

Thus, participating in continuous reflection seemed to encourage the preservice teachers in this class to consider *why* they would select particular teaching methods in their future classrooms. Put simply, they contemplated the *why* behind the *what*. For example, Jayne confessed,

> Writing my autobiography one entry at a time forced me to realize that I would have taught my students the same way I was taught as a child. I would have used lots of ditto sheets, and I would have demanded a quiet classroom. As I thought back to my childhood, I remembered how much I hated doing worksheets and how much I disliked teacher-centered classrooms. I don't want to be like that.

Research suggests that reflective activities are critical in effecting change in beliefs, and subsequently, in behaviors (Green, 1971). Because this investigation was not designed as a cause-effect study, the reader cannot assume that the participants' beliefs were changed as a result of the intervention. However, providing student-centered experiences and reflective activities consistently over the course of the semester seemed to encourage the students to thoughtfully consider theory as it relates to practice.

Data collected in Phase I of this study will serve as baseline data for the rest of the project. It will be interesting to see how the students' predictions of their teaching behaviors compare with their actual behaviors during their student teaching semesters and their first year of teaching. The study to date also has served as the impetus for several changes in the course structure. Specifically, future classes will include 15 hours of observation in reading in elementary classrooms. In this setting, students will implement some of the strategies they learn in class in a small group format with children. In addition, students in future classes will analyze research articles on comprehension instruction and relate the articles back to what they experience in class and in the public school classrooms.

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Appendix. Comprehension Strategies Taught in the Course

1. **Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DR-TA) (Stauffer, 1976):** The student *predicts* what he thinks will happen in the story, *verifies* or *changes* his predictions as he reads, *makes judgments* about the story, and then does *extension activities* with the story.
2. **Story Map**: During or after reading a selection, the student participates in an activity in which he explores the story grammar (characters, plot, setting, conflict, theme, etc.)
3. **Venn Diagram**: the student creates a chart with two or more overlapping circles in which he compares and contrasts ideas pertaining to the selection read.
4. **Semantic Mapping**: The student creates a graphic representation (usually with circles or rectangles) to indicate important ideas of what he has read and shows how the ideas are related.
5. **Insert Strategy (Vaughan & Estes, 1986)**: The student uses symbols such as question marks, exclamation points, stars, etc. to indicate his thoughts about the text (e.g., questions he has, what he does not understand, important points, what he disagrees with, etc.).
6. **SMART (Self-Monitoring Approach to Reading and Thinking) (Vaughan &Estes, 1986)**: Students preview text, use the symbols described in the Insert strategy in reaction to the text, pause to clarify understanding, read another chunk of text, pause to monitor comprehension again, finish reading text, reexamine any material that was not clearly understood, and summarize the text.
7. **Concept Squares (Vaughan &Estes, 1986)**: The student explores four aspects of a text (e.g., setting, characters, plot, resolution). The questions or concepts he works with may be chosen by the student, himself, or by the teacher.
8. **Directed Listening-Thinking Activity (Stauffer, 1976)**: In this activity, the student listens as the teacher reads aloud. The student *predicts* what he thinks will happen in the story, *verifies* or *changes* his predictions as he listens to the story, makes *judgments*, and participates in *extension activities*.
9. **Brainstorming**: The teacher asks, "What do you think of when I say __________?" and the students respond on paper or aloud to he teacher as she records the responses.
10. **LINK—List-Inquire-Note-Know (Vaughan & Estes, 1986)**: The teacher presents the students with a concept. The students then *list* everything they know about it and share aloud with the teacher, who records the

responses. Second, students *inquire* about ideas they don't understand. Third, the students blindly list everything they know about the topic after discussion of inquiries has occured. Finally, after the lesson, they note all they *know* about the topic.

11. **Sketch to Stretch (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1988)**: The student reads a story and then draws a picture that "appeared" in his mind while he read. He then shares the picture with the class.
12. **Cubing (Vaughan & Estes, 1986).** The student describes an object using six distinct categories based on the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.
13. **Trifold**: The student folds a piece of paper into thirds to explore three concepts of a narrative or expository text (e.g., beginning, middle, end).
14. **8-Page Book**: The student folds a piece of paper and makes strategic cuts with scissors to create a small book that has 8 pages. He or she then records information from a text or writes his or her own story based on a text.
15. **Dots (K. Smith)**: the student uses colored dots to mark words in texts of which they do not know the meaning. They then write what they think the words mean using context clues before verifying their hypotheses the dictionary definitions.
16. **Flip charts**: Students use two staples and three pieces of folded paper to create flip charts. They then explore 6 facets of a topic or record important information.
17. **Heart Strategy (K. Smith)**: Students use scissors and paper to create hearts with flaps. They then analyze and synthesize by creating analogies and comparing and contrasting themselves with characters they read about in narrative texts.
18. **Setting Bookmarks**: On strips of paper, students illustrate the setting from a text, then use descriptive words from the selection to support their illustrations.

FIELD BASED OR TRADITIONAL: EXAMINING PRESERVICE TEACHERS' RATIONALES FOR SELECTING A TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM

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Abstract

The preparation of reading teachers has received increasing scrutiny over the last decade. As the call for reform has intensified, research has indicated that field-based teacher preparation in professional development schools is a preferred method of preservice teacher education. However, little research has been conducted to explore what motivates a prospective teacher to choose a particular type of preparation over another. As literacy educators consider reform of their preservice programs, they must examine prospective educators' rationales for selection of particular types of teacher preparation. This article examines prospective teachers' reasons for choosing a traditional or field based teacher preparation program, their justification concerning their choices, and their advice to others concerning program choice. Implications of the findings for program development are discussed.

The achievement of America's students is directly linked to the quality of their teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Grant & Murray, 1999; National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996). In order for the youth of our nation to have access to a quality education, it is imperative that prospective teachers participate in the best preparation programs available (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Fuller, 1999; Tisher & Wideen, 1990). However, dis-

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satisfaction with traditional teacher preparation programs is evident (Holmes Group, 1995; Milken, 1999; Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 1999).

During the last twenty years, scholarly reports such as *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986) and *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996) have raised concerns regarding standards of teacher preparation and certification. Research with teachers from programs where the majority of preparation consisted of university based coursework and only six to ten weeks of student teaching has indicated that that their preservice experiences were limited and lacked relevance and practicality (Kagan, 1992; Lieberman, 2000).

As a result of a two-year study, The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future issued a call for the restructuring of teacher preparation programs. The Commission summarized the importance of teacher excellence by stating "American students are entitled to teachers who know their subject, understand their students and what they need, and have mastered the professional skills required to make learning come alive" (1996, p. 6).

The preparation of reading teachers has also received scrutiny. Traditionally, preservice reading teachers' preparation has been shaped by three diverse philosophies of teacher education: the traditional-craft approach, the competency-based approach and the inquiry-oriented approach (Alvermann, 1990).

The traditional-craft approach ascribes to the "apprenticeship" theory of teaching by assuming that as beginning teachers or "novices" observe master teachers they acquire an awareness of effective literacy instructional practices. This cognitive awareness then leads to understanding and implementation. Teacher preparation programs utilizing competency-based coursework require preservice teachers to demonstrate adeptness in explicit and observable skills/strategies associated with the effective teaching of literacy/reading. Varying viewpoints exist concerning the implementation of inquiry-oriented reading teacher education. However, a common "strand" is an emphasis on prospective teachers reflecting on instructional practices and problematic issues. While some would limit the problematic issues to those involving teaching/learning, others would include social, cultural and economic issues. Reflection on the problematic issues leads to an exploration of ways to extend, refine and/or justify reading/literacy instructional practices. Proponents of this approach believe this exploration facilitates an extension of the preservice teachers' knowledge of instructional strategies and an awareness of their theories and beliefs concerning literacy/reading instruction (Alvermann, 1990).

While the approaches vary, there are commonalties. All three approaches can be implemented within a university-based setting with preservice teachers demonstrating their expertise with peers. At some point in the program, the preservice teachers are required to show their proficiency in a field situation, usually student teaching. However, in many instances student teachers enter the setting with the purpose of fulfilling a specific university course requirement rather than focusing on the needs of the students (Mosenthal, 1995). Research has indicated that students in literacy methods courses emphasizing university based requirements often have difficulty utilizing the "mastered" knowledge when planning and implementing instruction in their own classrooms (Alvermann, O'Brien, & Dillon, 1990; Commeyras, Reinking, Heubach & Pagnucco, 1993; Wendler, Samuels, & Moore, 1989).

While teachers have identified student teaching as significant in facilitating the transfer of knowledge of instructional strategies and skills to implementation of effective instruction (Austin & Morrison, 1961, 1963; Kagan, 1992), in many teacher preparation programs it may be too little, too late (Britzman,1991). The call for preservice teacher education reform has focused attention on programs that intertwine school and university experiences (Jacobsen, Emihovich, Helfrich, Petrie & Stevenson, 1998; Shen, 1999).

Professional development schools have been identified as a viable alternative in the restructuring of teacher education (Button, Ponticell, & Johnson, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Goodlad, 1994; Holmes Group, 1995). While professional development schools have been implemented in many forms, a commonly accepted definition is a school setting in which teachers, administrators and university faculty collaborate in order to enhance preservice teacher education, inservice professional development, and pedagogy. In this field-based setting, preservice teachers have multiple and extended opportunities to interact and work with teachers and students (Stallings & Kowalski, 1990).

A New Program Emerges

In October 1992, the Texas State Board of Education responded to the need for teacher education programs to provide meaningful and practical experiences for preservice teachers by designating grant funds for the formation of professional development centers. Collaborative partnerships between public schools, universities, regional service centers and the private sector were eligible to apply for funding to implement new programs. Goals included enhanced preservice teacher preparation, enhanced inservice teacher professional development, and enhanced public school student performance.

To take advantage of these grant opportunities Texas A&M-Commerce formed a collaborative partnership with three school districts, two regional service centers and several business partners. Consequently, the university began to shift from its traditional program (university-based course work followed by a 10-week public school teaching experience) to a program that placed students in public school settings for a full year. The new field based program integrated course work with classroom experience, enhancing opportunities for the merging of theory and application. It required a time commitment of two consecutive semesters with two days per week in the public school the first semester and one day per week in a seminar of integrated coursework. The second semester, prospective teachers were in the public school five days per week with the exception of nine day-long seminars interspersed throughout the semester.

In both the new field based program and the traditional program, undergraduate preservice teachers received a Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies. This degree required general coursework from a range of subjects taught in the elementary school and eighteen hours of specific content area coursework within a specialization. In the traditional program students typically began taking courses in their specialization during their junior year. All specialization coursework was campus based. All elementary preservice teachers were required to take three reading courses.

Because approximately half of the preservice teachers historically chose reading as a teaching specialization the university reading faculty, in particular, viewed the creation of a field based program as an opportunity to intertwine theory and practice and produce a better-prepared teacher. In collaboration with public school partners, the field based program was designed so that the majority of reading coursework would be field based for both students seeking a preservice reading specialization and those specializing in other content areas. Students in the new program seeking initial teaching certification with a specialization in reading would take four of their six undergraduate reading courses in the field rather than the classroom only. Students who were not specializing in reading would take two of the three required reading courses during their field based experiences.

The two programs were offered concurrently. As the new field-based program was beginning the traditional student teaching program was being phased out. During this transition, prospective teachers were able to choose either traditional or field based teacher preparation.

Research Focus

While research has begun to explore field based teacher preparation programs, little research has been conducted concerning what motivates a prospective teacher to choose a particular type of preparation over another. If reform of preservice teacher education is to be successful and long lasting, prospective teachers' rationale and reflections concerning their selection of a type of teacher preparation cannot be ignored. Therefore, the objectives of this study were: (a) To examine prospective teachers' primary reasons for choosing a traditional or field based teacher preparation program, (b) To examine prospective teachers' secondary reasons for choosing a traditional or field-based teacher preparation program, (c) To examine prospective teachers' justification of their choices, and (d) To determine if the prospective teachers would advise others to pursue a like choice.

Method

Subjects

The subjects were 109 university students who had completed their final semester of teacher preparation coursework during the spring semester of 1996. Students completing the program during this semester had the option of choosing either a field based or traditional teacher preparation program.

Eighty-one of the students chose to participate in the traditional program of teacher preparation. This program required a ten week student teaching experience in collaboration with one teacher at the conclusion of campus course work. Thirty-eight of the traditional students were specializing in reading. All reading specialization coursework (six courses) for these traditional students was campus based and completed prior to student teaching. The forty-three students who specialized in other content areas completed three campus based reading methods courses prior to student teaching.

Twenty-eight students completed the field based program. Sixteen of these field based students chose reading as a specialization. Therefore, their field-based experience included two reading courses during the first semester, one addressing reading comprehension and the other involving planning and organization of reading instruction. During the second semester, or "residency," their two field based reading courses consisted of a course related to reading in the content areas and a reading practicum. The twelve students with specializations in other content areas took the comprehension and content reading courses as part of their field based experience. They did not take planning and organization of reading instruction nor the reading practicum.

Field based prospective teachers started the first day of public school and spent nine months working with a team consisting of a minimum of two mentor teachers and an university liaison. In addition, they participated in integrated seminars throughout the nine months.

Procedures and Data Analysis

The students were asked to respond in writing to the following questions: (1) What was the primary reason for choosing the traditional program or the field based program? (2) What other considerations were a part of your decision making? (3) Now that the experience is completed, defend the wisdom of your choice. (4) If your close personal friend at another insti-

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tution had a choice between a traditional or field-based program, what advice would you give your friend?

Questions 1 and 2 focused on the decision-making process. Question 3 required the prospective teachers to validate their choice. Question 4 was designed to determine if the student thought a similar program would be valuable to others.

Researchers qualitatively analyzed the data utilizing grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1992) and constant comparison (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Responses from students in the traditional program and the field based program were analyzed separately. Two researchers read the questionnaires to identify key ideas relating to each question. Each researcher listed all responses for each question on a chart, identified key ideas in each response and then identified the common categories of ideas across the group of responses for each question. The researchers compared their independently generated categories and through discussion and joint recursive analysis reached consensus on refined categories regarding responses to the questionnaire.

A third researcher not involved in the initial analysis inductively constructed a framework of categories for the questionnaire responses. The three researchers then jointly examined the data. Discussion continued among the three researchers until consensus was reached on the categories.

After the categories were established, the researchers independently reexamined the data and sorted the responses into the various categories. The researchers then met and discussion occurred until consensus was reached on the sorting of the responses. The responses were then tallied using a frequency count. The researchers collaboratively selected responses that were most illustrative of categories to be used as quotes.

Results

Question 1: Traditional Students— Primary Reason for Choosing Program

The major categories that emerged from question 1 for the traditional students were as follows: money (37%), time (33%) and already in traditional program(17%). In addition, the preferred location of public schools participating in the traditional program (5%), the belief that "no choice" was available (2%) or that the traditional program was the "best choice" (2%) and family considerations (1%) were also given as responses. Examples of responses categorized as time factors:

> "I had already taken courses that were included in field based when the program began. I would have to go an extra semester."
>
> "Traditional—field based takes too long."

> "Mainly the time frame and inconvenience of the field based program. I am getting my degree at an older age and I needed to get through as quickly as possible."

Examples of responses designated as money factors included:

> "The money; I work full time. It would be hard to be in the field based program considering the time you spend in the classroom."
>
> "I couldn't afford to work for a year with no money!"

The following are examples of location rationale:

> "The field based program was not available in [my area] and it would have been difficult for me to drive to the nearest field based sites on a daily basis."
>
> "Field based was not offered in my area and with a family it would have been extremely difficult to commute to other locations."

Question 1: Field based Students— Primary Reason for Choosing Program

The responses of field based students to question 1 revealed a different perspective. The primary rationale focused on the belief that the field based program provided an opportunity for an enhanced preparation (75%). Other considerations included the opportunity to work with a team of public school teachers or mentors (3%), the general response that field-based was the "best choice" (3%) and hope of overcoming "fear of the classroom" (3%). Sixteen percent of the prospective teachers perceived they had "no choice" concerning program selection. No explanation of this misconception was given.

Examples of responses focusing on enhanced preparation included:

> "I wanted to spend more time in a classroom. I knew I wanted more hands-on and I saw this as a way to do this."
>
> "I chose the field based program because I wanted to be involved in the school directly. I thought I would gain more from this program."
>
> "Field based got me into the school! It allowed me to 'touch base' and get a hold of what was out there before I was put out there."

Question 2: Traditional Students— Other Considerations for Choosing Program

The responses of traditional students to question 2 paralleled their responses to question 1. The dominant categories were time (28%), money (22%), that they had progressed "too far along" in traditional program (14%), and location (8%). Additional responses included family (7%) and personal (3%) considerations, that they felt prepared by previous experience in public schools (4%), negative comments they had heard about the field based program (2%), and the belief "the traditional program was as good" (1%). Eleven percent of the students did not respond to this question.

Several answers revealed that some traditional students did not have an accurate conception of the workings of the field based program. They presumed a full year, full-time schedule, while in reality the first semester of the field based program required part-time work (two days per week in the public school classroom and one day in seminar). Examples of responses indicating these misconceptions included:

> "I can't afford to student teach for one full year."
>
> "Some people are working to send themselves through school and that is almost impossible to do while student teaching all year."
>
> "I definitely feel ready for my own classroom after 10 weeks. One year is entirely too long to work under someone else."

Question 2: Field Based Students—
Other Considerations for Choosing Program

Field based students' responses continued to emphasize their perception that the quality of the preparation in the field based program was superior to that of the traditional program (43%). Additional rationales included the belief that participation in the field based program would enhance job opportunities (10%), the opportunity to participate in seminars (4%) and portfolio assessment (4%). Some stated the location of the field based centers was "more convenient" (4%). Others made the comment that the program "cost less" (3%); they did not explain their reasoning. Thirty-one percent of the respondents did not cite any secondary factors influencing their decision. Samples of field based student responses addressing job-related issues included:

> "Sitting in a classroom on campus could never prepare me for the real world of teaching. Now I'm ready to get a job!"
>
> "Portfolio! Both growth and resource! The idea that in the event of an opening in the district in which I student taught I was guaranteed an interview was encouraging."

Question 3: Traditional Students—Rationale for Choice

The majority of traditional prospective teachers (34%) defended their program selection by the general statement that the program was the "best choice." More specific responses included the opinion that the ten week program was sufficient (16%), the belief the traditional program was "equal" to the field based program (4%), statements that student teaching in any situation was not valuable (4%), and the perception that "no choice" was available (1%). Prospective teachers who had work experience as teacher aides, day care workers, or in other fields dealing with children (4%) indicated they believed they were already prepared for teaching and thus wanted to shorten the formal study preparation period as much as possible. However, 9% of the respondents indicated they would have chosen the field based program if time and money had not been factors. For these prospective teachers, the additional classroom experience in the field based program was perceived as a benefit.

Examples of traditional students' responses which cited "previous experience" include:

> "I defend my choice because I feel that I was already prepared to teach before I even came back to school to take all of these extra courses. I had studied juvenile delinquency and had entire semester courses on information that [the university] crammed into a bunch of courses at one time. I had worked with children all my life and I didn't need to take all of these extra classes. I wanted to get out as fast as I could, and traditional student teaching was the quickest."

> "I enjoyed the traditional program and my campus based classes. I had already had a good deal of experience in the classroom and with teaching children, so 'traditional' was perfect for me."

A sample of the comments of the traditional students who felt that the field based program would have provided a better preparation included:

> "I believe the field based program would have provided me with much needed experience, but I still believe that it would have been a financial hardship for those who support themselves through college."

> "I do feel that seeing the first and last day of the year would be a good experience. Coming in at the last of the semester was hard. The students were busy getting ready for the holidays, so I had to prepare for more discipline problems."

> "I feel like I am not as prepared as I could have been, but I feel this was the right choice for me. I would have liked to have seen the beginning and end of a year."

Question 3: Field Based Students—Rationale for Choice

Sixty percent of the field based students who responded to question 3 defended their program selection by indicating that they believed that their preparation was superior. Additional positive responses identified increased confidence (14%), opportunity to work with mentors (3%) and increased content area knowledge (3%) as defenses for their choice. The negative responses cited a preference of traditional student teaching (3%) and the statement "I'm just glad it's over!" (3%). These comments represented the beliefs of two of the twenty-eight field based prospective teachers. One expressed a need for more content area knowledge than was presented in the seminar format. The other field based student believed that teaching was "done by trial and error" and he or she "might as well be in my own classroom." Examples of responses describing enhanced preparation are:

> "I feel very prepared and ready to walk into my own classroom. I have the confidence in my teaching ability that I don't know if I could have gotten in ten weeks. I can see the 'big picture' instead of a small chunk of what teaching is."
>
> "I am glad that I went through the program. It gave me more time in the classroom to teach and self-evaluate."
>
> "My "first year" of teaching is behind me. I have encountered so much that will benefit me in my future as an educator!"

Question 4: Traditional Students—Advice to a Friend

Responses to question 4 revealed that 42% of the students in the traditional program would recommend the traditional program to a friend. However, 38% replied that the choice would depend on the circumstances or situation or the individual, indicating that if time and money were not primary considerations, the field based program would be the program of choice. Examples of responses indicating the advice would depend on the circumstances were:

> "It would greatly depend on their situation. If they had the financial aid, I would probably suggest the field based, because you would be able to get more classroom experience."
>
> "They should do what is most appropriate for them. Ten weeks or one year to learn all there is to teaching? Neither one! It takes a lifetime!"
>
> "Depends on circumstances. For people right out of high school, [field based] would be great. If you have a family, it might be better to do traditional. I think both should be offered."

Examples of responses stating the "friend" should choose the traditional route:

> "Go traditional! The pressure of only one semester to learn everything seems to make you learn it better and faster."
>
> "Traditional. The work done in the traditional program was so extensive that to do it a whole year would not have been worth it without a paycheck."
>
> "I would advise if they are mature to do the traditional program. I believe it to be adequate."

Question 4: Field Based Students—Advice to a Friend

The responses of the field based students to question 4 followed the pattern of their other responses. Seventy-eight percent of the preservice teachers stated they would advise a friend to choose the field based program based on their belief the preparation was superior. Some respondents stated their advice would "depend on the circumstances" (4%) while others alluded to the demands of the program by writing the program was "not for all students" (4%). Ten percent responded they would advise a friend to choose the traditional program and 4% of the prospective teachers did not answer this prompt.

Sample responses which demonstrate the belief that the field based program was superior include:

> "I would tell her to go through the field based program. I feel like they will learn and grow so much more as a professional teacher."

> "I would tell them if at all possible to choose the field based program. You are able to use and reflect on the strategies learned. It is the real opportunity to see if you really enjoy working with students and adults (teachers)."

Conclusions and Implications

The traditional students' choices were consistently driven by three factors: time, money and location. In contrast, the majority of the field based students based their choice on factors which indicated they believed the longer time period and varied experiences in the public school classroom resulted in enhanced preparation for a career in the teaching profession.

It was expected that the prospective teachers would advise friends to pursue the same path they had chosen. Field based students explained their choice by again focusing on specific instructional or school factors citing extensive experience, better preparation, increased confidence, preparation in content areas and the relationship they developed with the public school mentor teachers. A clear majority of field based graduates responded that they would recommend field based teacher preparation to a friend and "circumstances" were not deemed a significant consideration.

In contrast, the traditional graduates based their rationale on general or personal factors such as family, time, money and the general comment—"best choice." These responses seem to reflect the concerns of older students with families or others who felt pressure to complete their preparation as quickly as possible. Many of the traditional prospective teachers indicated they held a full-time job (40 hours per week) while completing their campus-based course work. Citing the need to continue working and to finish as quickly as possible to get a teaching position, they defended the wisdom of their choice by saying the short time period in the schools prepared them adequately. Consistently, their focus was on "getting finished." The students also presumed that since the experience of student teaching had been acceptable for years, it was still valid.

It is interesting that less than half of the prospective teachers completing the traditional program stated they would advise a friend to pursue the traditional program. It appears this traditional group was very aware of the pressures of various life situations, since more than one-third said their advice would depend on circumstances. While this study did not explore the specific circumstances and/or financial/personal situations of students choosing each type of program, this would be a valuable area for future research.

At the time of this survey, since the two programs were still in operation, the field based teacher program was still somewhat experimental in the minds of the students. Prospective teachers who chose the field based program were willing to exchange the known factors of the traditional program for the chance to have more hands-on classroom experience and work more directly in the classroom for a longer period of time. Their comments indicated they were willing to adjust their lives to develop the needed skills for success as a teacher. In contrast, the traditional students' comments suggest they viewed the ten week student teaching experience as the "quickest" means to an end—certification.

The contrasting responses from the graduates of the different programs provoked a myriad of questions among the faculty. Should the program be modified? Would the personal issues cited by the students who chose the traditional teacher preparation program be manageable if choice was eliminated? Should modifications be made to aid prospective teachers as they struggled with the issues of time, money and family? Were there items that were non-negotiable? Did prospective teachers' initial focus/rationale impact their success as teachers? Were those who were willing to sacrifice for the "best preparation" able to become better teachers than those who were searching for the "quickest way to become certified?" And ultimately, as professional educators, did we believe the field based program produced better teachers?

The field based program is now in its seventh year and student choice has been eliminated. However, in order for reform to proceed, the faculty has been committed to remain sensitive to the concerns of the students. Based on student feedback, eight additional public school centers have been added to the program, thus giving more options for location. For many students, this has meant less travel time and thus fewer expenses.

In addition, since the responses indicated numerous misconceptions existed about the demands of the new program, students now receive information about the program earlier in their university program. Faculty members reiterate that students are able to continue to work through the first semester of the field-based program. Consequently, large percentages of the students proactively plan and hold part-time jobs, particularly those that allow them to work on weekends.

The program continues to undergo scrutiny and change. Feedback is collected and analyzed each semester from preservice teachers, public school teachers serving as mentors, and faculty.

Concerns are ongoing. Nationally, field based programs continue to face challenges from changes in teacher certification processes and competition from alternative certification programs (Darling-Hammond, 2000). This field-based program faces the same challenges. Enrollment was at a high in 1997 with 186 residents in the Spring and 75 in the Fall. After a slight decrease, the number of residents in 1998 (Spring, 170; Fall, 56) and 1999 (Spring, 167; Fall, 60) remained consistent. However, the Spring 2000 enrollment of 130 residents indicates a decline. Many factors may have contributed to this enrollment decrease such as changes in state certification requirements resulting in a modification in university coursework prior to internship and an increase in availability of alternative certification programs. However, the university is engaged in self-study and recommendations have been made for "an intensive study of the current program with the goals of maintaining quality while making it competitive" (Zelhart & Ginther, 2000, p. 11.)

Locally, this self-study is crucial to determine the most effective way to meet the needs of our students—and prepare quality educators. Nationally, as the call for reform continues, more teacher preparation programs may examine the feasibility of field based teacher education within the context of professional development schools. As reading educators, we must examine our reading courses and determine which will benefit by the intertwining of theory and practice "in the field." In addition—as professional educators—we must continue to explore the dilemmas, concerns and rationale of our prospective teachers as they choose and complete teacher preparation programs. However, as we research the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs and implement reform, it is critical that quality remains the priority. We must remember the primary finding of The National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, "what teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn" (1996, p. 1).

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INTEGRATING LANGUAGE AND LITERACY THROUGH PROJECTS:
AN APPLIED INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

This study explored the perceptions of teaching interns implementing learning projects with linguistically, culturally, and ability diverse elementary students in mixed-age classes. Thirteen interns enrolled in UTEEM, a full-time integrated graduate program, engaged in a collaborative experience with their peers in which they implemented a two-week project integrating language and literacy. The study examined the interns' perceptions of (a) the impact of the experience on their ability to implement effective language and literacy learning experiences, (b) the benefits associated with their participation, and (c) the difficulties encountered. Data from their responses revealed that the majority felt that participating in the project enhanced their learning. Many indicated that they were more knowledgeable about children's literature and better able to implement strategies designed to develop literacy. Although all interns considered co-teaching to be beneficial, the majority indicated that working collaboratively was the most difficult aspect of the experience.

> Just as no man lives or dies to himself, so no experience lives and dies to itself. Wholly independent of desire or intent, every experience lives on in further experiences. Hence the central problem of an education based upon experience is to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences. (Dewey, 1938, p. 27-28)

When planning learning experiences for preservice teachers, as well as elementary school students, effectively facilitating relevant learning is a real challenge. It is recognized that relevant and meaningful experiences that provide continuity across experiences are agents for continued learning. Dewey (1938) explains that it is the quality of the experience that is important and states that the quality is affected by "its influence on later experiences" (p. 27). He emphasizes that "every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after" (Dewey, 1938, p. 35). By being aware of the impact each experience has on others, teacher education programs can make more thoughtful decisions about how to provide opportunities that will most effectively promote continued growth for preservice teachers.

These are vital considerations for those involved in educating preservice teachers. It is hoped that throughout teacher education programs, course work will positively affect field experiences. Likewise, field experiences combined with course work should more positively affect preservice teachers' ability to link courses to present and future practice. The intent of applied internships is to provide this type of experience because it is through active participation in the teaching process that preservice teachers develop an understanding of teaching. This understanding is affected "by their participation in actual teaching experiences and their own perceptions of what they understand about these experiences" (Dugan, 1999, p. 184). Therefore, in addition to providing the opportunity to learn by experiencing teaching, it is important to ascertain the learning that takes place by examining how preservice teachers perceive their experiences.

This study focused on preservice teachers' perceptions of their ability to facilitate effective language and literacy learning experiences with linguistically, culturally, and ability diverse students in mixed-age classes after collaboratively implementing learning projects with their peers. In addition, the preservice teachers' perceptions of the benefits associated with their participation and the difficulties encountered while implementing the project approach were examined. The intent was to determine whether working collaboratively to implement the project approach was perceived to positively impact the preservice teachers' learning.

During the two-week intersession at a year-round school, preservice teachers (who were referred to as interns throughout the study) planned and implemented integrated projects in which students engaged in investigations into specific topics that were of interest to them. Project-oriented learning was emphasized because projects based on students' interests and experiences (a) "can be ideal ways to encourage language and conceptual development" (Abramson, Robinson, & Ankenman, 1995, p. 198); (b) enable "students to achieve curriculum objectives in ways that are far more meaningful than using a textbook" (Abramson et al., 1995, p. 201); and (c) encourage children to "naturally form mixed-age groupings as they choose their own projects" (Stone, 1998, p. 235). Katz and Chard (1993) describe a project as "an extended study of a topic usually undertaken by a group of children, sometimes by a whole class, and occasionally by an individual child" (p. 209). The project approach involves students in actively seeking information, constructing projects, and sharing their learning (Abramson et al., 1995; Katz & Chard, 1993). Throughout the process, teachers encourage students to apply a variety of skills and strategies across the academic domains as students interact with others and their environment to find out more about their topic of interest. Because students acquire and apply knowledge and skills in meaningful and interesting ways, the project approach promotes personal involvement in learning and enhances students' intrinsic motivation to learn (Katz & Chard, 1993). Retention of what is learned is increased because the emphasis is on personal engagement and active investigation (Elliott, 1998).

Based on this same premise, it would seem that preservice teachers would benefit from their involvement in a project-based learning experience. Harris and Fuqua (1996) explain that project work is valuable for preservice teachers in a diverse, mixed-age classroom because it allows them to observe children as active participants in their own learning. A study by Abramson et al. (1995) examined the effects of preservice teachers' utilization of the Reggio Emilia approach, which emphasizes a project-based curriculum, with diverse elementary-age students. They conclude, "Student teachers were successful in utilizing strategies from Reggio Emilia schools to design an enriching curriculum. In doing so, they discovered the power of the Reggio Emilia approach to reach all children, especially the culturally and linguistically diverse" (p. 201).

The Reggio Emilia approach also emphasizes collaboration among all members of the school community including students, teachers, and parents (Abramson et al., 1995). Collaboration among teachers is becoming more prevalent in schools today. Because "teachers are being called upon to implement school programs through collaborative work, particularly in the field of special education" (Kamens, 1997, p. 90), there is a need to provide preservice teachers with opportunities to collaborate with peers. In her study of student teachers who were placed on fifth-grade teams in order to facilitate collaboration, Kamens identifies several advantages to the collaborative model for student teaching as well as the impact on the teaching experience. She states that student teachers perceived the greatest advantages as being the support they received from peers and the opportunity to share ideas, materials, and methods. In addition, the student teachers reported that collaboration had a positive impact on "(a) planning skills, (b) self-esteem, (c) professionalism, and (d) lesson execution/teaching techniques" (Kamens, 1997, p. 97).

Although Abramson et al. (1995) and Harris and Fuqua (1996) suggest that project work is valuable for preservice teachers and their students and Kamens (1997) concludes that there are advantages to providing opportunities for interns to collaborate, little is known about the interns' perceptions of their own participation in projects involving peer collaboration. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the retrospective perceptions of interns who collaboratively implemented the project approach with their peers. This study was based on the premise that (a) preservice teachers can learn from each other when working in a collaborative environment, (b) project-oriented learning in school is beneficial for integrating language and literacy across the curriculum, (c) implementing project-oriented learning enables preservice teachers to adapt instruction for diverse learners in a mixed-age context; and (d) examining preservice teachers' perceptions can provide insight into their learning. The predominant research questions were (a) What did the interns perceive as the impact of their working collaboratively with their peers to implement an integrated project on their ability to facilitate effective language and literacy learning experiences with linguistically, culturally, and ability diverse students in mixed-age classrooms? (b) What did the interns perceive as the benefits of working collaboratively with their peers to implement an integrated project? (c) What did the interns perceive as the difficulties of working collaboratively with their peers to implement an integrated project?

Methods

Participants and Setting

At the time of the study, the thirteen participants were part of a cohort group enrolled in the Unified Transformative Early Education Model (UTEEM) program, a full-time integrated graduate program preparing preservice teachers to work with linguistically, culturally, and ability diverse students, birth to age eight. They attended a state-supported university located in Northern Virginia in the suburbs of Washington, D.C.

As part of the program requirements, the UTEEM interns participated in a two-week intersession project at a highly diverse, multicultural elementary school. At the time of the study, the school was in its initial year of its modified year-round schedule. Between the first and second quarters of the academic year, the school offered optional two-week intersession classes designed to provide elementary-age students with enrichment, remediation, and recreation. As part of a collaborative effort between the university and school, groups of three to four interns planned and implemented integrated projects. Support for planning occurred through simultaneous enrollment in four university classes: Development and Assessment of Diverse Learners, K-3; Language and Literacy Development for Diverse Learners, K-3; Integrating and Adapting Curriculum Across Content Areas for Diverse Learners, K-3; and Developing Concepts in Early Childhood Mathematics and Science for Diverse Learners, K-3.

At the conclusion of the semester, 11 of the 13 interns voluntarily participated in a written survey designed to tap their perceptions of the intersession experience. One intern was unable to attend class the day the survey was conducted, and therefore, did not participate. Another intern began the survey, but needed to leave and did not return the questionnaire.

Procedures

At the beginning of the fall semester, the intersession coordinator of the year-round school met with the interns to provide information about the modified year-round schedule and more specifically about the October intersession. At that time, she shared the results of the interest inventory completed by the elementary school students. Using the information gathered by the school staff, the interns brainstormed topics that were also of interest to them. They used this list to form four groups of three to four based on common interests.

After the initial meeting, the interns had five weeks to develop their projects. During their group planning meetings, the titles of their projects emerged: Kid's Krazy Kitchen; Poetry: You Are a Poet; Pulp Art: From Trash to Treasure; and Vamanos! Let's Explore El Salvador. Like the titles suggest, each project developed in its own unique way with widely varying approaches and foci. Kid's Krazy Kitchen was a science-oriented project that encouraged children to examine their world by using common household ingredients to conduct science experiments. The culminating activity was a cooking show in which the students were the writers, producers, actors, and audience. The poetry project was a language-based project that explored multiple forms of poetry, rhythm, and meter. Students wrote and shared their own original poetry. Many English language learners participated in this project. Pulp Art: From Trash to Treasure provided students with an opportunity to learn about recycling as they learned the steps for taking trash and converting it into paper. Their final product was the creation of a book written on the paper they made. Vamanos! Let's Explore El Salvador provided students with an environment that actively involved them in becoming familiar with the climate, geography, vocabulary, food, music, and culture of El Salvador. The interest inventory the students completed indicated that many English-speaking students wanted to learn Spanish because of the high percent of Spanish-speaking students in the school. This project was designed to provide an opportunity for both English-speaking students and Spanish-speaking students to interact and converse as they learned about El Salvador.

In addition to project development, the interns participated in their regularly scheduled classes and internships. For every two-week cycle, the interns attended classes from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. for four days and then participated in their unpaid internships at local elementary schools for six days. Six of the interns were involved in internships at the year-round school. The remaining seven held internships at three other local elementary schools that were on a traditional academic schedule. During this part of their internships, the interns spent time observing teachers and students, interacting with students, co-teaching with their mentor or cooperating teacher, working with small groups of students, and teaching specific lessons. After the intersession project, they returned to their sites and completed their full-time internships, which involved full-time independent teaching and independently implementing integrated units of study.

To prepare for the intersession, the professors incorporated relevant information into class readings and discussions. They provided guidance and support relating to topics such as developing curriculum, integrating content areas into the project, planning for and implementing project-oriented learning, writing lesson plans, and assessing students. In the language and literacy development course, the professor emphasized the importance of incorporating quality children's literature into the project and how to develop language and literacy within the context of a project. In addition, the professors allotted time during the curriculum strand for the interns to meet in their groups to design the projects. Additional group meetings took place outside of class.

On the initial day of the intersession, the interns attended a school faculty meeting, set up their rooms, and finalized their plans for the first day with students. The implementation of the projects took place over the next nine days. Each day, at least one professor was on site to observe the interns in action, to be available for individual consultation and troubleshooting, and to meet with the interns as a group at the end of the day for formal debriefing. At the end of the second week, each team met to discuss and document student learning and complete a rubric they devised to provide feedback and information to the students' classroom teachers.

The week after the intersession, the interns and the intersession coordinator met one afternoon to participate in a debriefing facilitated by the university professors. The intersession coordinator shared data collected from students and intersession teachers, including the interns. The interns discussed the data and shared their own insights from the experience.

At the conclusion of the semester, the interns responded to a questionnaire (see Appendix) designed to elicit their retrospective perceptions of the intersession experience. This delay was intentional as it allowed the interns to contrast the project with more traditional elementary classrooms. The survey consisted of closed responses and open-ended questions. The closed formats allowed participants to respond using the same alternatives making "the task of interpreting the meaning of the answers" more reliable while at the same time the open-ended questions gave respondents an opportunity to express their views in their own words (Fowler, 1988, p. 87). Comparisons across the closed and open responses provided further insight into the interns' perceptions of their experiences during the intersession.

Data Collection and Analysis

Throughout the project, the professors observed and took notes. During the last language and literacy development class of the semester, one professor administered the questionnaire. At that time, 12 of the 13 interns were present. One intern did not attend class that day due to circumstances beyond her control. The professor introduced the survey and explained to the interns that their participation was completely voluntary. All 12 of the interns present elected to participate. The professor instructed them to take as much time as needed to respond. The respondents completed the questionnaire independently. After everyone was finished, the professor collected the surveys. One intern left early and did not complete the survey; therefore, the data collection consisted of 11 rather than 12 questionnaires.

Once the questionnaires were collected, the data were organized and coded based on Fowler's (1988) suggestions for "preparing survey data for analysis" (p. 127). Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the closed responses, whereas the responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed qualitatively. The responses to the open-ended questions were listed and key ideas were highlighted. The list was reviewed, the categories that emerged were identified, and the responses were coded accordingly (Fowler, 1998). One of the researchers and an independent rater coded the responses independently resulting in a 97% interrater reliability.

Findings

The interns indicated that the project provided the context for experimenting with literacy strategies that were (a) introduced and developed during their class discussions, (b) emphasized in readings on integrating language and literacy into a mixed-age project, and (c) observed on site in their internships. Overall, the interns felt that the intersession project was a positive experience because it provided them with an opportunity to implement the project approach and to experiment independently, without the input of a cooperating teacher, with different teaching and learning strategies in a relatively low-risk environment. In addition, the interns perceived that they became more knowledgeable about children's literature and literacy strategies. As a result of this experience, they perceived that they were better able to implement strategies designed to develop literacy by (a) creating a literature-rich environment, (b) incorporating meaningful writing, and (c) scaffolding emergent readers. They felt that they were better prepared to integrate curriculum, provide hands-on learning, manage a classroom, work with multi-age groupings, implement strategies for second language learners, and co-teach with a peer.

It was also evident that they viewed co-teaching with their peers as a beneficial experience. They indicated that they were able to rely on their peers when making decisions, selecting materials, implementing assessment plans, and providing instruction. However, they stated that working as a team was difficult at times. Finding time to prepare for the day's lessons was challenging as was developing a trusting relationship with a peer in the condensed two-week period. Although co-teaching throughout the project was not without its difficulties, the interns indicated that they perceived this as a beneficial experience that impacted their learning.

Perceived Benefits

One section of the survey instructed the participants to rank order a list of seven possible benefits from 1 through 7 with 1 being the most beneficial and 7 being the least beneficial. The ranks were then collapsed with a rank of 1 and 2 being a high rank, 3 through 5 being a middle rank, and 6 and 7 being a low rank. The benefits were then ranked based on the percent of respondents who ranked the statement as a 1 or 2, indicating a high rank (see Table 1).

Of the seven statements, two emerged as being perceived as highly beneficial by the majority of the participants. Fifty-five percent of the sample indicated that the opportunity to implement the project approach was highly beneficial, and 55% perceived that providing a low-risk opportunity to experiment with different teaching and learning strategies was highly beneficial. Only 27% ranked working collaboratively in groups of three to four as a high rating. However, when asked to indicate whether they strongly agreed, agreed, felt neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with a statement, 100% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: Co-teaching with other interns was beneficial to me. This will be discussed later.

When asked to describe what was most beneficial about the intersession project and to explain why, 63% indicated that having the experience teaching a class was beneficial. One respondent explained, "I enjoyed being able to 'teach' a class from ground up. We were the ones responsible for classroom management and designing our unique project approach. It was an invaluable learning experience for me as a future teacher." Thirty-six percent of the responses implied that having an opportunity to implement the project approach was beneficial. This was evident in one participant's response: "Being able to experience the project approach was most beneficial

Table 1. Perceived Benefits

RANK	STATEMENT	% HIGH RANK	% MIDDLE RANK	% LOW RANK
1	The intersession provided an opportunity to implement the project approach.	55%	18%	27%
1	The intersession project provided a low-risk opportunity to experiment with different teaching and learning strategies.	55%	45%	0%
3	The intersession provided an opportunity to participate in an innovative project that was unique.	36%	36%	27%
4	The interns worked collaboratively in groups of three or four.	27%	36%	36%
5	Each group of interns was given the freedom to select its own focus for the projects.	18%	73%	9%
6	The intersession project provided an opportunity to apply what had been learned in courses during the first part of the semester.	9%	55%	36%
7	During the intersession project, university faculty members were on site.	0%	36%	64%

Note. Due to rounding, percents may not add up to exactly 100%.

for me. After doing the readings and learning in class, I was actually able to experience it. Even though I was apprehensive in the beginning, I really got a feel for how to implement projects." Likewise, 36% stated that co-teaching with peers was beneficial as is evident in the following statement: "Being able to work with my classmates. We have all been trained the same way, and it was great to have consistency in the classroom. We all had the same thoughts and ideas about what we want to implement. Sometimes it's hard to do this when working with a cooperating professional who is not open to new ideas. Plus the support from each other was great."

Perceived Difficulties

In addition to the perceived benefits, the participants also recognized there were difficulties associated with implementing the project. One section of the survey instructed the participants to rank order a list of ten possible difficulties from 1 through 10 with 1 being the most difficult and 10 being the least difficult. The ranks were then collapsed with a rank of 1 through 3 being a high rank, 4 through 7 being a middle rank, and 8 through 10 being a low rank. The difficulties were then ranked based on the percent of respondents who ranked the statement as a 1 through 3, indicating a high rank (see Table 2). The majority of the perceived difficulties related to time.

Table 2. Perceived Challenges

Rank	Statement	% High Rank	% Middle Rank	% Low Rank
1	Finding time to prepare for the day's lessons	64%	27%	9%
2	Completing the course requirements related to the project	55%	27%	18%
3	Finding time to meet with group members to design and plan the project	45%	45%	9%
4	Sharing the amount of work to be accomplished	27%	45%	27%
4	Managing the classroom	27%	55%	18%
4	Maintaining discipline	27%	36%	36%
7	Implementing the project	18%	73%	9%
7	Teaching the children	18%	36%	45%
9	Working collaboratively in teams of three or four	9%	27%	4%
9	Reaching consensus within the group	9%	27%	64%

Note. Due to rounding, percents may not add up to exactly 100%.

Finding time to prepare for the day's lessons was ranked high by 64% of the participants, and 55% of the participants ranked completing the course requirements related to the project as highly difficult. Finding time to meet with group members to design and plan the project was highly ranked by 45% of the respondents. Only 9% ranked working collaboratively in teams of three or four as highly difficult. Likewise, 9% indicated that reaching a consensus with the group was highly difficult.

When instructed to describe what was most difficult about the intersession project and to explain why, 63% indicated that working collaboratively as a team was challenging. One respondent stated, "Team work. I'm so used to being the one 'in charge' that at times, I found it trying to get a consensus on a particular decision." Another indicated, "Working in the group. The others were so creative and worked on their own, and I needed more group time than they did." A third participant explained, "It was a real pill trying to get together with fellow teachers." The responses also indicated that 45% of the participants found meeting course and site requirements difficult. One participant explained, "The most difficult thing for me during this time was trying to complete assignments, plan for intersession, and plan for our full-time internship at the same time." Only 27% cited guiding student behavior as being most difficult.

Perceived Impact

To ascertain the perceived impact on the growth of the interns as teachers, and more specifically, teachers integrating language and literacy across the curriculum, the participants responded to various statements by indicating whether they strongly agreed, agreed, felt neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the statements. As a result of the intersession project, 91% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that they became more knowledgeable about children's literature, and 73% agreed or strongly agreed that they were better able to implement strategies designed to develop literacy (see Table 3). In addition, 100% agreed or strongly agreed that they were better able to integrate mathematics into a project and 91% agreed or strongly agreed that they were better able to integrate science into a project. Overall, 91% agreed or strongly agreed that they used what they learned from designing, planning, and implementing the intersession project during their independent teaching when they returned to their internship sites after the intersession project.

When asked to list strategies they learned in classes and through their readings that they implemented during the intersession project, 63% of the participants mentioned at least one literacy-related strategy. Strategies included journals, read alouds, incorporating literature, and implementing effective reading strategies before, during, and after reading. One participant elaborated, "The language course was useful for me in terms of framing reading experiences in ways that are meaningful."

Table 3. Perceived Impact

RANK	STATEMENT	% AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED
1	Co-teaching with other interns was beneficial to me.	100%
1	I was better able to integrate mathematics into a project.	100%
3	During my independent teaching, I used what I learned from designing, planning, and implementing the intersession project.	91%
3	I became more knowledgeable about children's literature.	91%
3	I was better able to integrate science into a project.	91%
6	I was better prepared for managing a classroom.	82%
7	I was better able to implement strategies designed to develop literacy.	73%
7	I was better prepared for dealing with discipline.	73%

Discussion

The project experience was designed to provide teaching interns with a low-risk environment for linking classroom learning to field application. It was assumed that by involving the interns in a project emphasizing project-oriented learning, their learning would be enhanced and the linguistically, culturally, and ability diverse children involved in project work would benefit from their experiences (Abramson et al., 1995). A survey conducted by the school administration, but not included here, indicated that the elementary students felt they learned a lot from their participation in the intersession classes. The administrators reported that 86% of the students enrolled in the intersession classes taught by UTEEM interns indicated that they felt they learned a lot from their participation in the class, 10% selected "maybe" when asked whether they learned a lot in the class, and 4% responded that they did not learn a lot from the class. A survey of the regular classroom teachers supported the students' perceptions. When the teachers were asked about student learning, they responded by indicating that the students learned "a lot," returned to the classroom with "improved skills," and came back "interested in future learning." In addition, oral feedback that the administrators reported receiving from the classroom teachers indicated that the children returned to their classrooms excited about their experiences and eager to share their new learnings with their teachers and classmates.

Likewise, the interns indicated that they returned to their full-time independent internships with a renewed excitement about implementing the project approach. They stated that they felt more confident as teachers and felt like they were able to draw from their intersession experience to design and implement the project-based learning during their independent full-time internship. One student recognized the advantage of the intersession experience when she noted, "Being able to experience the project approach was most beneficial for me. After doing the readings and learning in class, I was actually able to experience it." Another intern commented about the impact the project had on her own independent teaching: "I felt confident that I was capable of implementing a curriculum in a student-centered, hands-on, and developmentally appropriate way." This opportunity was seen as a means to capitalize on past and present learning to enhance future experiences (Dewey, 1938).

By implementing the project approach with diverse students in mixed-age classes, the interns experienced how an in-depth investigation based on children's interests is designed, implemented, and integrated across the curriculum. One of the benefits of the project approach is that it is flexible enough to adapt to the demands of the local curriculum (Burchfield, 1996). Because the interns were expected to incorporate the state's standards of learning into the projects, they learned first hand how it is possible to integrate specific objectives and still have the freedom to explore topics of interest. One intern elaborated on the impact of this freedom: "It was very beneficial to have complete freedom to decide on a topic and implement it in any way we planned. It was exciting to see our ideas come to life and see the project approach in action."

Another benefit of project work is the child-centered, hands-on nature of the experience. It is our belief that the integrated nature of the university teacher preparation program created the context for the interns to be successful. In implementing the program, they could continuously link the university course work to facilitating project-based learning. On a daily basis, the presence of the faculty enabled interns to evaluate student learning and interest in order to modify and accommodate project activities accordingly. In this way, the interns felt more comfortable about letting "children guide the direction of the project."

Because literature is an integral component of the project approach (Koeller, 1984), the interns also felt they gained valuable experience in sharing project-related books, poems, stories, and reference materials with their students. When implementing projects, it is important that authentic materials are readily accessible to students (Abramson et al., 1995) and "that teachers have many literature sources for reading aloud, for referencing and for self-chosen reading" (Koeller, 1984, p. 332). Therefore, as part of the course requirements for the language and literacy strand, the interns developed an annotated bibliography of children's literature related to the project. These titles were displayed prominently in the classrooms and were easy for students to obtain, thus a variety of printed materials were available to help students explore topics of their choice (Trepanier-Street, 1993). As a result of this attention to literature, the interns perceived that they concluded the project more knowledgeable about children's literature.

Likewise, the interns recognized the impact that projects have on language and literacy development and felt better able to employ literacy-related strategies. They reported engaging the students in journal writing and employing journals as a reflective tool. Poetry writing, scientific writing, informational writing, and story writing were also prevalent in their classes. The interns used text to provide directions to students, share songs, and to engage them in their learning. They encouraged spoken language, as well. Students discussed their learning, shared stories, talked about literature, and socialized with peers. The environment encouraged students to be users of written and oral language.

In the area of reading, the interns understood that "what the teacher does before reading, during reading, and after reading is crucial to active and purposeful reading" (Vacca & Vacca, 1999, p. 177.) One intern explained that she prepared "children for literature activities by having them draw on their personal experiences." Others reported discussing books with students by focusing on developing experiences before, during, and after the reading. Many of these strategies were incorporated during read alouds to the class. Independent reading was also evident as students referred to books to further their understandings of the topics being explored.

Although all of the projects were language-rich, two of the projects provide contrasting examples of how the interns created environments and implemented instruction that employed the above-mentioned strategies. In "Pulp Art" the student population was comprised mostly of kindergartners and third graders. The kindergartners were emergent readers and needed scaffolding to make meaning with the printed word. The older children, on the other hand, could handle more complex text. The interns used a variety of strategies to meet the diverse needs of the children, including language experience, graphic organizers, rebuses, and sequence charts that became increasingly more complex. As they progressed through the phases of papermaking, they built descriptive vocabulary based on the multi-sensory experiences and used questioning to support prediction.

"Vamanos! Let's Explore El Salvador" was a project based on a more wholistic approach to language and literacy development. The students were immersed in language-rich activities throughout the day. This project was identified by school administrators as appropriate for children whose home language was other than English. In addition, English-speaking students had expressed an interest in learning Spanish and were eager to participate. For these reasons, the interns provided learning experiences in both English and Spanish, and the interns recognized the role the Spanish-speaking students could play in facilitating basic Spanish language development. To meet the goals of the project, the interns (a) provided cooking experiences with recipes in both languages, (b) invited in a Spanish-speaking guest who did a cooking demonstration in Spanish that was supported by modeling, and (c) created a market where the students had the opportunity to use Spanish phrases and read signs in Spanish. As a result, the interns created the context to support natural oral and written language development in both English and Spanish.

As it became evident that the interns felt more confident about employing literacy-related strategies, a question about the impact of peer collaboration arose. Did the interns perceive that there was a benefit to working collaboratively with their peers to implement the project? When compared to other possible benefits, working collaboratively was ranked at the midway point in the list of benefits. In addition when asked what was most beneficial about the experience, less than half indicated that co-teaching with peers was beneficial. However, all of the interns responded positively to the statement: Co-teaching with other interns was beneficial to me.

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Upon further investigation, it became evident that the interns did indeed perceive that collaborating with peers had a positive impact on their learning. One intern stated, "It was a terrific opportunity to see and learn from my classmates who are full of good ideas!" Several compared it to the adage, "Two heads are better than one." One explained, "As a group we were able to come up with ideas and strategies that I would not have been able to do on my own." These perceptions are supported by Staley's (1998) conclusion about teachers who worked collaboratively to plan and implement projects as part of the Reggio Emilia approach. She explains that as a group, the teachers "generated many more exciting and creative curriculum ideas than any one individual could have initiated" (Staley, 1998, p. 25).

Collaboration also provided an opportunity for the interns to reflect upon their own practices. One intern stated that she "was forced to reevaluate" the rationale behind "implementing certain strategies." She found herself questioning her "own teaching strategies." Another intern explained that collaboration "not only made me respect my peers even more, it gave me ideas on how I can be an effective teacher. They made me realize areas I could really improve on and ideas that I can incorporate into my curriculum." As a result of the collaboration with their peers and their reflections on their interactions, the interns gained new ways of examining their teaching as well as a greater sense of confidence. One intern summed up the impact of the project experience: "This was so important. The challenge of the intersession allowed us to problem-solve, plan, and discuss ways to best meet the needs of individual children."

Although the interns perceived that the collaborative process had a positive impact on their learning, it is important to note that they also recognized that collaborating with their peers was sometimes a challenging task. Finding time to juggle demands such as teaching all day, attending classes in the afternoon, planning for the next day, and completing other course assignments left some of the interns feeling that it was difficult to make time to talk and reflect about what they were doing as a team. Others felt the tension that arises when teammates have different ways of thinking about what should happen. One intern explained, "Working with two other interns was difficult because our ideas of what the class should look like differed." Another one had difficulty "trying to visualize some of the activities" her peers "wanted to implement."

Despite these perceived difficulties, the interns overwhelmingly asserted that the collaborative implementation of the project was a positive experience. The interns' perceptions at the conclusion of the project suggest they felt more knowledgeable about incorporating children's literature into a project and better able to implement literacy strategies with linguistically, culturally, and ability diverse children.

Limitations

Although valuable insights into the interns' perceptions can be gained, there are several limitations to this study. First, the small sample size impacts the ability to make generalizations to the whole population. Other limitations include the two-week implementation period and the impact of the learning curve inherent in the first-time implementation of the project. In addition, because this study relied on self-report measures, it is limited by the fact that there was no independent outcome measure.

Conclusion

Despite the limitations, the results of this study hold significant implications for teacher educators making decisions about the types of applied experiences that are valuable for preservice teachers. By providing the interns with a low-risk, less structured environment for them to build on their previous experiences, they perceived that they were able to experiment with and develop a variety of literacy strategies for linguistically, culturally, and ability diverse children within the context of a project. They also felt they were better able to integrate language and literacy across the curriculum, adapting strategies for diverse learners in a mixed-age context. The interns indicated that their learning was further enhanced by the collaboration that occurred among themselves, which they felt resulted in their eventually being able to apply what they learned to their own independent teaching and independent application of the project approach.

Just like projects give children "the opportunity to be creative, inventive discoverers" (Trepanier-Street, 1993, p. 26), this project served as a vehicle for the interns to explore, experiment, create, and learn. It provided the continuity needed for them to identify what they knew from previous experiences, "assimilate the new information into their cognitive structures" (Trepanier-Street, 1993, p. 26), and reflect on their experiences to solve new problems encountered. Referring to the impact the project had on her own growth as a teacher, one intern commented, "I couldn't have incorporated the project during my independent teaching without first having practice/experience during the intersession." This sentiment is a strong indication that what a person "has learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations that follow" (Dewey, 1938, p. 44).

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Appendix. Questionnaire

For two weeks in October, you participated in an intersession project at Timberlane Elementary School in lieu of attending classes and being at your assigned site. The UTEEM professors are interested in determining a) the impact that the intersession project had on your growth as a teacher; b) how you benefited from the experience; and c) what difficulties you faced. Please complete the following questionnaire to assist us in this endeavor. We appreciate your time and effort.

A. Circle the response that most accurately answers each question.

1. What was your assigned internship site for the Fall 1998 semester?
   a. School G. b. School G. C. c. School M. d. School T.
2. Which project did you design and implement during the intersession?
   a. El Salvador b. Krazy Kitchen c. Poetry d. Pulp Art
3. Including you, how many interns were in your group?
   a. three b. four
4. How would you rate the overall performance of your group?
   a. excellent b. good c. fair d. poor
5. How did you feel about how your group functioned?
   a. very satisfied b. satisfied c. unsatisfied d. very unsatisfied

B. For each statement below, read the statement and then indicate whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), feel neutral (N), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD) with the statement.

1. When the intersession project was first announced, I was excited about participating. **SA A N D SD**
2. While my group was designing and planning the intersession project, I was excited about participating. **SA A N D SD**
3. While my group was implementing the intersession project, I was excited about participating. **SA A N D SD**
4. After the intersession was over, I was glad I participated in the project. **SA A N D SD**
5. During my independent teaching, I used what I learned from designing, planning, and implementing the intersession project. **SA A N D SD**
6. Co-teaching with other interns was beneficial to me. **SA A N D SD**
7. I recommend that future cohorts participate in an intersession project. **SA A N D SD**
8. If given the opportunity, I would participate in an intersession project again. **SA A N D SD**
9. After participating in the intersession project. I was better able to implement strategies designed to develop literacy. **SA A N D SD**

10. As a result of participating in the intersession project, I became more knowledgeable about children's literature. **SA A N D SD**
11. After participating in the intersession project, I was better able to integrate science into a project. **SA A N D SD**
12. After participating in the intersession project, was better able to integrate mathematics into a project. **SA A N D SD**
13. As a result of the intersession project, I was better prepared for managing a classroom. **SA A N D SD**
14. As a result of the intersession project, I was better prepared for dealing with discipline in the classroom. **SA A N D SD**

C. Rank the following from one (1) to seven (7). One (1) was the most beneficial to you. Seven (7) was the least beneficial to you.

____ During the intersession project, university faculty members were on site.
____ The intersession provided an opportunity to implement the project approach.
____ The interns worked collaboratively in groups of three to four.
____ Each group of interns was given the freedom to select its own focus for the projects.
____ The intersession project provided an opportunity to apply what had been learned in courses during the first part of the semester.
____ The intersession project provided a low-risk opportunity to experiment with different teaching and learning strategies.
____ The intersession provided an opportunity to participate in an innovative project that was unique to T. Elementary School.

D. Rank the following from one (1) to ten (10). One (1) was the most difficult for you. Ten (10) was the least difficult to you.

____ working collaboratively in groups of three to four
____ finding time to meet with group members to design and plan the project
____ reaching consensus within the group
____ sharing the amount of work to be accomplished
____ implementing the project
____ completing the course requirements related to the project
____ teaching the children
____ finding time to prepare for each day's lessons
____ managing the classroom
____ maintaining discipline

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E. Respond to the following as fully as possible. Use the back or attach a sheet if you need more space.

1. Describe what was most beneficial to you about the intersession project. Explain why.
2. Describe what was most difficult for you about the intersession project. Explain why.
3. List the strategies you learned in classes and through your readings that you implemented during the intersession project.
4. Describe the impact that collaborating with other interns during the intersession project had on your growth as a teacher.
5. Describe the impact that collaborating with the faculty during the intersession project had on your growth as a teacher.
6. List the strategies you implemented during your independent teaching as a result of your collaboration with other interns during the intersession.
7. Explain how your participation in the intersession project impacted your interactions with students during your independent teaching.
8. List any suggestions you have for making the intersession project experience more beneficial to future cohorts.
9. What else do you want to say about your experience with the intersession project?

PRESERVICE TEACHERS EXPLORE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTION: AFFIRMATION AND RESISTANCE

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Abstract

This study examines the experiences and responses of preservice teachers in one literacy class as they experienced and contemplated various aspects of culturally responsive instruction. The inquiry was planned to inform practice by identifying student response to significant course experiences that offered opportunities to reflect, respond, and dialogue about existing beliefs and critical issues concerning a responsive approach to teaching. Data collected included written early literacy memories, responses and reflections on professional readings and class discussions, teacher-researcher reflective notes, written artifacts and responses from various class activities, and responses to children's literature. Findings point to the need for teacher preparation classes that invite preservice teachers to reflect on their existing beliefs and identify points of tension as they mold their philosophies of teaching in preparation for the diversity of students in today's schools.

> *Learning to teach is not a mere matter of applying decontextualized skills or of mirroring predetermined images; it is a time when one's past, present, and future are set in dynamic tension.* (Britzman, 1991, p. 8)

As a teacher educator, I join many others who are aware of the tension to which Britzman alludes. Studies have shown that preservice teachers' past histories in school as well as their beliefs about teaching and learning can greatly influence their perceptions about the teachers' role and classroom practice (Calderhead, 1991; Fox, 1994; Grossman, 1990; Zancanella, 1991). Preservice teachers' beliefs may be so strong that they "limit the range of ideas or actions that they are willing and able to consider" (Bird, Anderson, Sullivan, & Swindler, 1993, p. 254).

Many teacher educators have added a reflective component to coursework to enable preservice teachers to identify their beliefs and grapple with tensions between their beliefs and new concepts presented in classes. One issue that seemingly begs the need of reflection, dialogue, and professional support within preservice courses is the relationship between culture and literacy instruction.

In the literacy courses I teach, I often invite preservice teachers to explore their own culture so that they can recognize its value and features. This occurs early in the semester, adhering to Banks' (1994) belief that learners must be in touch with their own cultures before attempting to understand the significance of ***multicultural***. As we explore literacy, cultural notions are explored as well through class sessions that create contexts for instructional explorations and decisions. Cultural notions are woven naturally throughout the fibers of the course in the hope of encouraging thinking about culturally responsive instruction.

This study was designed to examine the experiences and responses of preservice teachers in one literacy class as they contemplated varied aspects of culturally responsive instruction. I have found that new insights and understandings often occur for my students only after they have had many opportunities for experiences and reflection around particular issues and instructional practices. Therefore, I wished to explore what classroom experiences best supported and extended their insights. The intent was *not* to identify change in individuals in merely one semester. Rather, this inquiry was planned to inform practice by identifying significant course experiences that offered opportunities for students to reflect, respond, and dialogue about critical issues.

Culturally Responsive Instruction

Culturally responsive instruction is describeddifferently by various scholars. For example, Au (1993) defines culturally responsive instruction as "instruction consistent with the values of students' own cultures and aimed at improving academic learning" (p. 130). Banks and Banks (1993) emphasized that modifying instruction to accommodate a learner's knowledge, cognitive style, sensory preferences, and language skills can affect achievement positively. Guild (1994) said that an understanding of culture reminds us that no single method of instruction will be best for all students and therefore instructional decisions should be learner-centered and based on a knowledge of the learner's background. Ladson-Billings (1994) stated that when using knowledge of a student's background to support instruction, teachers must consider the student's experiences as legitimate knowledge.

As the demographics of the United States schools change, the diversity of cultures and ethnicities in our society increases and educators are confronted with increasing demands to consider many aspects of culturally relevant and responsive instruction. Ways to adapt and adopt new instructional strategies to nurture literacy growth in all children are needed in all classrooms. Nieto (1999) continuously reminds us that students of all backgrounds, languages, and experiences need to be acknowledged and valued as well as used as important sources of their education.

The various definitions of culturally responsive instruction appear to have these common criteria: a) knowledge of student background and of the communities from which students come; b) application of this knowledge to instructional strategies; c) awareness of a plethora of strategies that can be appropriately adapted to the culturally and linguistically diverse learner; d) authentic opportunities to use language; e) conscious determination as to how much and when to use first and second languages; f) culturally rich resources, such as authentic and accurate children's literature; g) authentic assessment in keeping with instructional methods; h) advocacy for students; and i) culturally sensitive communication (e.g., Garcia, 1990; Izquierdo, Ligons, & Erwin, 1998).

The preservice teachers described in this inquiry experienced many aspects of culturally relevant instruction and explored this approach through texts, scholarly articles, and interactive class experiences. The study sought to provide insight about preservice teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive instruction. In addition, I was interested in how course experiences and personal beliefs supported or inhibited students' perceptions.

Methodology

The present inquiry took place during one semester of a language arts/reading methods block. The course was designed around the six language arts modes, which were integrated with children's literature and multicultural topics. The research shared here is part of a larger study which comprehensively focused on understandings of culture and literacy learning with which preservice teachers began the course and those that evolved throughout the semester during which culturally relevant instruction was practiced and taught. The population consisted of 38 predominantly Caucasian students in a southwestern university. Of these, two were Caucasian males, thirty-six were females, of which one was Asian American, two were Hispanic American, one was African-American, and thirty-two were Caucasian.

As students interacted around a variety of resources and strategies in this highly experiential class, the following questions within the larger study became of particular interest as data was collected and analyzed:

1. Do preservice teachers' responses and interactions to various aspects of the class represent old beliefs, new knowledge and insights, or a conflict of old and new perceptions?

2. How do the preservice teachers perceive the pedagogical practices associated with culturally responsive instruction?
3. Do the preservice teachers' beliefs limit the range of ideas and activities they consider?

Data consisted of written early literacy memories, responses to and reflections on professional readings and class discussions, teacher-researcher reflective notes, written artifacts and responses from various class activities (both independent and small group), and responses to children's literature. Each session was considered significant as the course design was experiential to consistently inform the instructor about the individual learners, including their needs, beliefs, questions, and both existing and new perspectives as a result of reading, discussing, and responding. Throughout the semester, data were collected and analyzed on an ongoing schedule to inform teaching and to make theory-based instructional choices. The creation of categories was key to analyzing the multiple data sources. Goetz and Lecompte (1984) describe this search for categories as systematic, informed by the study's purpose, the researchers' orientation and knowledge, and the constructs generated by those within the study. The criteria of culturally responsive instruction discussed earlier served as constructs for the inquiry.

Data analysis began by identifying within the various data sources key words, phrases, and events that particularly evidenced existing beliefs and responses to issues of culture, literacy learning, multicultural literature, and other aspects of culturally responsive instruction. This information was coded according to the constant comparative method of Glasser and Strauss (1967) as described by Lincoln & Guba (1985). Identification of categories began intuitively and continued as identified key words and events were continuously compared with others in the same category and other categories. As data collection and coding continued, each category began to take on distinct properties in terms of how student comments, responses, and actions reflected the instructional context. Additionally, after a closer examination within categories, various incidents were identified as "affirming incidents" and others as "incidents of resistance."

The numerous categories were collapsed into the following ten that reflected student insights on culture and literacy instruction within the variety of data collected:

- Insights into one's own culture
- Insights into the cultures of others
- Knowledge of the student and his/her background
- Knowledge of the community as resource
- Communicating with parents
- Learner centered, authentic instructional strategies

- Choice and voice within the classroom
- Assessment
- ESL learning environments
- Personal response to multicultural children's literature

The design of this study is in keeping with the belief that teacher research is "systematic and intentional inquiry" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, p. 3). Numerous data sources collected consistently, reflection and review of findings by students and other teachers, triangulation of findings, and use of reading from theoretical frameworks promoted validity (Mohr & MacLean, 1987).

The findings of this study are shared according to the three questions that were the focal point for gathering and analyzing data. The various categories described above became natural organizing points to address findings pertinent to the first question, "Do preservice teachers' responses and interactions to various aspects of the class represent old beliefs, new knowledge and insights, or a conflict of old and new perceptions?" In addition to the categories, the various aspects of culturally relevant instruction, as summarized in the introduction, are useful for considering responses to the second question, "How do preservice teachers perceive the pedagogical practices associated with culturally responsive instruction?" The third question, "Do preservice teachers' beliefs limit the range of ideas and activities they consider useful?" actually leads to a discussion of possible conclusions and ties together the various incidents shared within questions one and two.

Question 1: Do Preservice Teachers' Responses and Interactions to Various Aspects of the Class Represent Old Beliefs, New Knowledge and Insights, or a Conflict of Old and New Perceptions?

As data were examined, I realized that each category consisted of incidents representing existing beliefs and new insights, as well as tensions between the old and new. Some of the responses of students are shared within each category heading below.

Insights into Culture

Insights into one's own culture and into the cultures of others represent the first two categories. These categories included any data related to existing beliefs or the contemplation of new beliefs about the notion of *culture*, both in general and as related to education. When students were asked to reflect in writing on what multicultural education is, a variety of responses emerged. These ranged from "learning to teach a variety of cultures and their beliefs" to statements that indicated a comprehensive understanding of content, instructional strategies, and both educating about and for a diversity of students.

For example, one young woman said in response to class discussion, "Our class discussion today was really enlightening. To hear different opinions about culture has helped me to think about how it means different things to different people." However, some discussants responded to this question with, "By talking so much about diversity we are making the problem even worse." One class discussion almost had argumentative tones as an African-American woman tried to explain to others why race does matter. Some students couldn't understand the reason behind the *multicultural* issues and how they affected even students in our class. The phrase, "Why can't we all just be Americans?" reflected similar comments I had heard in the past.

Knowledge of the Student and His/Her Background

Students seemed to welcome the various assignments involving writing and talk that worked to create a community. Such strategies are but one way a teacher may become informed. One student talked about her feelings as a child and her hopes for the future as a teacher: "When I was in second grade, I always knew the teacher didn't like me. She never asked anything about my home life and I never felt I could please her with my work. What a difference it would have made if she had used some of these strategies to learn about her students' home life." In addition, in discussing the book, *Just Call Me Stupid* (Birdseye, 1994), a story about a fifth-grade boy who was highly intelligent but was unable to read because of emotional factors, students shared their realization of the importance of knowing more about a student's background. In the case of Patrick in this story, his teacher's knowledge of his situation led to a hopeful ending. Of concern to readers, though, was how to discover this information and how involved might a teacher become in the lives of his/her students.

Knowledge of the Community as Resource

A comment of one student that related to this category was, "Perhaps one of the most valuable class experiences for me was investigating my community and designing a meaningful lesson around what I found there. I never realized that one of the best assets to learn to read and write, talk and listen is just outside the school doors." This comment, on a final self-evaluation, reflected others who said they began to realize the importance of connections to a child's home.

Communicating with Parents

One class assignment involved "take home bags" that were created using a variety of "bags," such as a literary lunch box, writer's briefcase, and math sack. One student reflected on this assignment as follows:

> It took such a long time for me to decide what lessons might be good to connect home and school and at the same time be enjoyable for the

> child. But when I finally began, I could think of so many possibilities depending on the particular children I will have. Probably most difficult was thinking of a unique way to involve middle school students and their parents, but once I began investigating possible books titles, the traveling journal worked well. I can't wait to meet my parents!

As some students began to consider the cultures in areas where they wanted to teach, the bags became more diverse in terms of literature and artifacts that were part of the enclosed assignments. In groups, they discussed how this aspect of culturally relevant instruction might improve the educational experience for teacher, child, and parent.

Learner-Centered, Authentic Instructional Strategies

While this category actually represents the second research question, it also is a category that consists of old beliefs, new experiences, and the tension between the two. One student commented, "I hope I can help my students think about culture through the art strategy that we used today. It helped me express feelings that might have been more difficult in words." Another responded to a chapter in the text with, "The room described here is just great. How wonderful to have a bilingual print-rich environment where all children can learn words in two languages. I plan to work hard to create an environment like this." Another comment about the instructional content presented was: "I never experienced writing in this way [referring to writer's workshop]. To have someone care about your personal stories must be the best way to approach what is often a dreaded task." Another student shared his wife's comments, who as a first year teacher was experiencing tension between personal philosophies and reality: "I really think the strategies we are learning here are good and my wife felt the same way about her education courses. The reality is, she [now] feels that once you get into the schools you cannot use many of the strategies because of other expectations and requirements in the curriculum." After the student made this comment, the class discussion continued concerning districts that have a pre-designed weekly curriculum and the demands on teachers to prepare students for the state assessment test.

Choice and Voice Within the Classroom

As the class was experiential in nature, students were given opportunities to be in interactive groups. They also had options as to what strategy to use to extend their thinking and a voice in deciding how to manage particular sessions. While many greatly appreciated this chance to practice the social construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978), others offered resistance to considering these strategies significant to learning. Their public school experiences had focused to a great degree on teaching to the test. Although there was evidence that they saw literature circles, inquiry projects, and oral language presentations as positive experiences (also reflective of the prior category), for some, their notion of good teaching was preparing children for the state assessment test. As students participated in experiences such as literature circles, we explored these learning events using their own participation as examples. However, the perception of learning for some students seemed limited by past experiences.

Assessment

As previously mentioned, state testing had been important in most of these students' previous classroom experiences. Therefore, many anticipated that a focus on state testing was to be a major part of their job as a teacher. Many were quick to see the problems connected with too much attention given to tests. Issues such as time, stress, and boring review sessions were brought up during class discussions—discussions that often were initiated by students themselves. A few students who admitted they always did quite well on tests didn't think it was such a "bad" thing. In addition, some of these students responded on their self-evaluations that tests might be less demanding than the numerous assignments expected in our course. Some students questioned any assignment returned without a number or letter grade, although each assignment always had descriptive comments and suggestions. One student responded, "I think that multiple ways of assessment are a lot of work for a teacher, but it can make a student feel good to know he has accomplished things in so many ways."

ESL Learning Environments

Implications for working with children who were learning English as a second language were included in each chapter of our text and embedded within our daily discussions and group work. With so many students having a first language other than English in our region, the chances were great that some of these preservice teachers would be teaching children who were learning English as a second language. Discussions about ESL learners resulted in some statements and questions of concern. For example, two preservice teachers stated that they believed the resource room was the place for these second language learners. It seemed that while students accepted the rich classroom descriptions given in the course as positive, some felt that inclusion of ESL students within this type of classroom was going beyond the call of duty. They were aware of the many other responsibilities of teachers and stated that the workload of a teacher does not allow time for individual help. Interestingly, almost all students could describe a literacy-rich ESL classroom when asked to do so in writing.

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Personal Response to Multicultural Children's Literature

An important aspect of culturally responsive instruction included in the course was related to multicultural children's literature. I carefully wove many titles throughout the curriculum that represented authentic, culturally rich books. Since a children's literature course was not required in the preservice teacher's degree plan I was even more aware of the significance of the experiences and books provided in class. Early literacy memories written by the students revealed familiarity with very few children's books other than classics, such as *Good Night Moon* (Brown, 1947), *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), or the works of Dr. Suess. As students read, responded, and reflected on children's literature in the course, they made many connections to books that reflected their own life experiences even if the books represented another culture. However, on numerous occasions these preservice teachers also showed resistance to books whose theme and characters seemed different from their own group or experience. Some also resisted books that contained thought-provoking situations. In one instance, a group had read Bunting's *Smoky Night* (1994). This Caldecott winner tells of the Los Angeles riot from the perspective of a young African-American boy and leaves the reader with the possibility that positive relationships developed after this incident. One student from Korea commented that she didn't like the book. When asked why, she said she felt that the Korean woman was depicted as mean and the young African-American boy didn't like her. She also made reference to an existing struggle between the two ethnic groups that she felt has been present in the United States and stated she feared that this type of portrayal might perpetuate such ill feelings. Immediately, numerous students replied that it was "only a story" and they didn't think the book presented the characters in a bad light. They said they enjoyed the book because a negative event—the riot—was given a potentially positive outcome. When the students went into small groups for further discussion, members of the class in other groups continued to say that the Korean student was being overly critical. The students in her group continued discussing the book with her and later responded in their journals about the experience of having their eyes opened to conflicts in some communities between Korean-Americans and African-Americans.

Another children's literature scenario concerned a multicultural literature project in which the students examined books considered by experts to be authentic and objective. At the end of the assignment, one Caucasian student responded that she probably wouldn't use such "stereotypical books" in her classroom. An African-American student offered personal opinions supporting the authenticity of *Tar Beach* (Ringgold, 1991) and other significant titles. However, the first student held onto her belief that some of the life styles depicted in the literature were stereotypical.

Concerning children's literature, one preservice teacher said, "Reading the many different multicultural books made me realize just how important each culture is and how significant it is to learn about other cultures and beliefs. Our multicultural text set project allowed me to see how many perspectives there are on one theme." Another student said, "*The Middle Passage* by Tom Feelings (1995) really said the most to me and this is ironic because there are no words in the book. However, it really made me think about the horrible injustice experienced by the African-American people." The various statements and responses on this topic at times created tension as new ideas challenged familiar concepts and instructional approaches.

Question 2: How Do Preservice Teachers Perceive the Pedagogical Practices Associated with Culturally Responsive Instruction?

This section reflects on students' perceptions of culturally relevant practice. Evidence of both embracing culturally responsive instruction and being a bit hesitant to do so characterized students' responses overall. As noted in the introduction, various types of culturally responsive instruction and content were part of the design of the course. These included the importance of knowledge of students' background and of the communities from which students come; application of this knowledge to instructional strategies; awareness of a plethora of strategies that can be appropriately adapted to the culturally and linguistically diverse learner; opportunities to use language and a conscious determination as to how much and when to use first and second languages; culturally rich resources such as authentic and accurate children's literature; authentic assessment in keeping with instructional methods; advocacy for students; and culturally sensitive communication.

Comments in each of these categories were found within the broader categories that emerged from the data sources that represented response, reflection, and dialogue. In general, students showed excitement over ideas, resources, and instructional notions. Resistance seemed to arise only as students tried to connect these current ideas to their past experiences. For example, many had no prior experience in writer's workshop, literature discussions, or multiple forms of assessment. A few students did have teachers in their own experience who could vouch for the powerful nature of these strategies.

Perhaps the issue that incurred the most resistance was the notion of *culture* itself. As the class occasionally returned to "mini-discussions" on cultural issues, the various filters through which individuals viewed and described culture were evident.

The third question provides an opportunity for making information obtained in exploring the first two questions useful in light of preparing our preservice teachers to meet the needs of the diverse students they will be likely to teach. This question invites reflection on the findings cited previously and their role in creating curriculum for preparing teachers.

Question 3: Do Preservice Teachers' Beliefs Limit the Range of Ideas and Activities They Consider?

The purpose in presenting information on culturally relevant practice in this course was to create an awareness of ways teachers could acknowledge the diversity of experiences upon which children are building and learning. In my view, it is of great importance for preservice teachers to have numerous opportunities to be confronted with the tension between affirming culturally relevant practice and resisting it based on their own existing beliefs. I found that each student's resistance was different, depending on his/her prior experience. In addition, the response of all within the community of learners seemed to affect the degree to which students embraced or limited the ideas that were advocated.

Limitations

Exploring limitations to this study helps set the parameters of further discussion. As stated earlier, this study is not about immediate change, but about planting seeds that over time might create new insights that support culturally relevant instruction. Cultural learning and the many affective filters created by life experiences through which individuals perceive the world are complex. Strategies and understandings that may be considered significant by one person may never be thought so by another. The fact that these events occurred within a class where ultimately the instructor made an assessment may have limited students from sharing responses that were not aligned with the professor's thinking, despite the creation of community. In addition, responses that connect to existing beliefs may not have been shared because they were personal and students were not comfortable discussing them.

Discussion and Conclusion

Several issues emerge from the data presented. The generally homogeneous group of students at our university may have been quite protected by their communities as they grew up. Their resistance to being confronted with multicultural ideas in education classes may result from tension created through contrasting new ideas with the life styles they have always known. It seems preservice teachers need opportunities to discuss and create insights based on knowledge of both their own and other cultures. Critical discussions in this course often related to some students' difficulty in realizing the value of their own cultures. By contrast, others in the class could easily identify those elements that made them who they were, but could not imagine what it might be like to be part of a culture whose integrity has been challenged.

It also appeared that many students from the predominantly mainstream cultures had difficulty extending culturally responsive instruction beyond the boundaries of what their own "school" culture found acceptable and comfortable. Areas of resistance appeared to originate in earlier beliefs about instruction, especially those related to culture. These culturally based beliefs seemed ingrained and related to resistance to issues such as selection or censoring of books, instruction/assessment, and curriculum related to social issues. In addition, teaching strategies that required critical thinking, problem solving and problem detecting were often received with skepticism by some preservice teachers.

The powerful learning that can accompany a response to literature was an important new understanding for some students who listened to their Korean peer discuss her reasons for responding negatively to a book. Although many students had earlier affirmed an understanding and belief in the theory of reader response, as well as an acceptance of the idea of evaluating literature from the perspective of those within a particular group, some class members resisted the validity of such a theory in action. Opportunities for such discussions involving many diverse responses invited thinking on critical issues. Additionally, the student who felt the selected books were stereotypical is a reminder that readers may not know what constitutes a stereotype. Such a situation provides a vehicle for discussion of stereotypes as well as the nature of authentically and accurately created books.

Implications for preservice teacher instruction reflect the ideas of Banks (1994), who argues that the knowledge development of teachers is a process. In addition, while helping students' explorations of their own culture and literacy is important, it is critical for teacher educators to also provide insights into the nature of ethnicity and language aspects of culture. This includes dealing with prejudice and biased feelings. Teachers in school classrooms where culturally responsive instruction is in place should be encouraged to share and address preservice classes. Multiethnic literature that provides greater understandings of culture can be read and discussed.

More time for reflection on existing beliefs and personal resistance to new ideas should also be incorporated into the preservice curriculum. Sometimes, individuals preparing to teach have agendas that they plan to bring to classrooms because they have been dissatisfied with the educational system they or children in their family have experienced. Pajares (1993) advises us to work hard to both acknowledge teacher candidates' beliefs as legitimate aspects of schooling and to continue challenging our students to reconsider any beliefs that may hinder effectiveness in the classroom.

While reflecting on beliefs and concepts is important, the idea stated by Wolf, Hill, & Ballantine (1999) is significant. They state:

> We believe, however, that we will fail our students if we only have them read about cultures other than their own or listen to us lecture. Instead, it is essential for them to practice these ideas, for what is the use of teaching about culturally conscious pedagogy, unless we provide opportunities for our preservice teachers to *experience* it. (p. 425)

In depth experiences and contemplation of culturally responsive practices can help bridge what Goodlad (1990) calls the gap between the situated complexity of life in classrooms and the decontextualized, formal principles which are often transmitted through university curricula. In such experiences, "teacher candidates have opportunities to become knowledge producers rather than knowledge receivers, moving from what Kutz calls unconfident answer-knowers to confident question-askers" (Fox, 1994, p. 394).

Further research is needed that addresses a variety of ways that might enhance the cultural understanding of preservice teachers. Important questions include the following: How can the connections between literacy and culture be better understood and internalized? What events/experiences can best be implemented to help preservice teachers contemplate old beliefs and their sources and internalize new understandings concerning excellence in instruction for our diverse school population? What inquiries might preservice teachers undertake themselves to help nurture their understandings of culturally responsive instruction—both their affirmations and resistance? Further research might also explore which strategies are most powerful in beginning to implement culturally responsive instruction in teacher education classrooms.

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INTERNATIONAL HORIZONS IN LITERACY EDUCATION

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: A QUALITATIVE CASE SURVEY OF TEFL PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS IN ARMENIA

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Abstract

Since 1961 the Peace Corps has sent over 160,000 Americans to 132 different countries, many to teach English as a foreign language. Peace Corps teacher preparation is intensive and field-based. This article presents findings of a survey in which twenty Peace Corps volunteers were asked to identify the challenges they experienced during their first four months of teaching English in Armenian schools. They were also asked to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their teacher preparation. From their perspective as novice practitioners, Peace Corps Volunteers provide useful insights about the transition from theory to practice in one alternative teacher preparation program. Moreover, analysis of their responses and recommendations to increase teaching effectiveness raise intriguing questions about the goals of teacher education in all settings.

Introduction

Since 1961 the Peace Corps has sent over 160,000 Americans to 132 different countries (Hoffman, 1998). Many of these volunteers teach English as a foreign language to elementary, secondary and university students in the host country. An invitation to Peace Corps service comes after a highly competitive selection process in which prospective volunteers must demonstrate intellectual achievement, resourcefulness, respect for diversity and a deep commitment to social change (Schleppegrell, 1993). In short, the Peace Corps volunteer must possess qualities of character perceived by many as desirable for effective teachers.

Peace Corps teacher preparation is intensive and field-based (Pagano, 1965; Schleppegrell, 1993). The curriculum has theoretical, pragmatic and cultural components. Preparation includes the study of educational theory, classroom management and the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (Bowman, Burkart, & Robson, 1989). Concurrently, Volunteers live with a family and study the host country language. In its holistic approach, the Peace Corps curriculum favors a constructivist view of learning (Fosnot, 1996). That view is consistent with the theoretical framework of most current teacher education programs which conceptualize learning how to teach as an experiential and reflective process mediated by sociocultural contexts (Fosnot, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Myers, 1991; Schon, 1987). Consequently, Peace Corps and conventional teacher preparation programs are paradigmatically compatible.

To accommodate current beliefs about the sociocultural and experiential nature of learning, many universities have developed alternative paths to teacher certification. Preservice teachers in these programs are often immersed in a school community from the beginning of their studies, so that they are "educated in the milieu in which they will eventually function" (Duquette, 1997, p. 264). In fact, a growing body of research supports the value of such contextualized and experience-based learning (Newton, 1997; Upitis, 1999).

Peace Corps teacher preparation resembles some of the most popular of these programs, particularly those designed for post-baccalaureate students (Upitis, 1999). Although the length of training is often shorter than in traditional education programs, many believe post-baccalaureate students come to their studies with a breadth of knowledge and experience that traditional education undergraduates lack (Upitis, 1999). Moreover, like Peace Corps volunteers, most students who enroll in these programs are highly motivated and have a history of academic success. But despite the growing popularity of non-traditional teacher preparation programs, few studies to date have explored them from the perspective of participants. The comparative newness of such programs may account for the paucity of research: alumni are still relatively few in number.

From their perspective as novice practitioners, PCVs can provide useful insights about the transition from theory to practice in one alternative teacher preparation program. Furthermore, these insights may also deepen our understanding of similar issues faced by beginning teachers in other educational settings. In this article, then, we will report findings of a survey in which twenty Peace Corps TEFL volunteers were asked to identify the challenges they experienced during their first four months of teaching English in Armenian schools. PCVs were asked to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the training they had received and to offer recommendations for future training. After a brief description of the research design and TEFL training curriculum, we will present survey results. Finally, we will compare findings to other research on preservice and novice teachers' perceptions of their teacher preparation. We believe cumulative insights from this body of research will raise intriguing questions about the goals of teacher education.

Research Design

Site and Participants

Located in Eastern Europe and "land-locked" by Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Iran, Armenia was "Sovietized" on December 2, 1920 (Papazian, 1999). Long one of the most prosperous Soviet countries, Armenia suffered a devastating earthquake in 1988. The following decade brought political upheaval and economic distress. Today, Armenians are struggling to rebuild the country's political and economic infrastructure. Their efforts are being supported through a variety of international relief initiatives.

The Armenian educational system has changed little from Soviet days. Instruction is typically teacher-directed. Textbooks, if available, are usually outdated and other instructional resources are limited. Classes are large and many students share desks. Few schools have heat; most close from mid-December through mid-February because of the cold temperatures. Despite the bleak conditions, professional development projects are underway and many educators are optimistic about Armenia's future (Klooster & Newton, 1999).

The PCVs who participated in this survey ranged in age from 23 to 29. They entered Peace Corps service from New York, New Jersey, Louisiana, Ohio, Wisconsin, Virginia, Vermont, California, Idaho, Oregon, Kentucky and Missouri. All were college graduates with undergraduate majors in Philosophy, Psychology, English, Political Science, Anthropology, Sociology, Diplomacy, and International Relations. One volunteer had a Master of Arts in Secondary Education.

At the time of this survey, all but one had been teaching full-time for only four months. Half the PCVs teach primarily elementary, middle or secondary students (ages 6 to 17); half teach college-age students (ages 17 to 20). All teach in villages or small cities across Armenia. Most PCVs work in shabby settings without other Americans nearby. One typical situation was described like this:

> I teach 6, 7 and 9th forms in the village of Akunk, in the central part of Armenia. My students range in age from11-16 years. The school building I teach in is horrible—freezing cold, no heat or electric, glass missing from windows, paint peeling off wall, broken chairs and desks . . .

Research Questions

Three research questions guided data analysis: 1) As a novice teacher, what have been the greatest challenges you have faced? 2) In what ways, did your Peace Corps training prepare—or not prepare—you for these challenges? 3) What kinds of support would help you be more successful in this teaching experience?

Methodology

We used a qualitative case survey paradigm (Merriam, 1988). Primary data were PCV responses to a written survey (see Appendix). These surveys have also been used as data in a longitudinal study focused on the cultural adjustment of PCVs in Armenia (Newton & Smolen, 2000). A qualitative case survey research design frequently uses data gathered for larger studies to "answer new questions or confirm new interpretations" (Merriam, 1988, p. 156). Like all qualitative research, case survey does not posit a hypothesis. Instead, it seeks to identify and categorize themes as they emerge from the data. Here open-ended questions were posed in order to generate unfettered responses pertinent to the research questions.

The data analysis process was inductive, based on identifying beliefs within and among subjects. First, we created an individual record for each participant. Second, we created a case record for each research question under which we listed all responses. Third, using Glaser and Strauss' (1967) "constant comparative" method we coded these responses into categories by looking for broad domains and specific belief patterns from which we might develop theories about the research questions.

Survey results were contextualized through analysis of all teacher training materials used by the volunteers and field notes from two visits to Armenia. In addition, we conducted two interviews with Peace Corps teacher educators, one an Educational Program Specialist and one an Armenia TEFL trainer.

Field-Based TEFL Teacher Training

PCVs underwent three months of TEFL training in Armenia with a one-week practicum. Training included theory, practice, and cultural information. The TEFL training provided PCVs with an overview of different language methods. Emphasis was on Communicative Language Teaching where meaningful communication using authentic language is privileged over a grammatical syllabus. CLT focuses on language functions, helping learners use language for real-life purposes. Teachers use problem-solving and other interactive activities such as skits, role-playing, games and mini-dramas to encourage listening and speaking.

The Peace Corps has also incorporated a community content-based approach. Here teachers bring social or community-based issues into language lessons in order to make language learning relevant. Throughout training, PCVs receive intensive Armenian language instruction and live with a local family. Training emphasizes understanding the community in which they work, its value system and the way local citizens view a child's participation in the educational system (Pagano, 1965).

Results

Perceptions of Teaching Challenges

When asked to identify their greatest teaching challenges, 52 items were cited. From those, five broad categories emerged: 1) students; 2) lesson planning; 3) professional relationships; 4) cultural contexts; 5) physical contexts (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Peace Corps Volunteers' perceptions of teaching challenges.

Students

- Developing motivation
- Lack of initiative/responsibility
- Maintaining classroom discipline
- Gaining student respect

Lesson Planning

- Planning for varying ages/abilities
- Dissonance between PC training goals and school goals
- Lack of material resources

Professional Relationships

- No support from other teachers/administrators

Cultural Context

- Understanding local values
  ex., attitude towards cheating
  low expectations for schooling
- Communicating in Armenian

Physical Context

- Texts non-existent or outdated
- Duplicating materials expensive and difficult to obtain
- Inflexible room arrangements
- Lack of heat/furniture/broken windows, etc

"Students" and "lesson planning" were cited most frequently. PCVs complained about "lack of motivation," and saw their students as "indifferent, passive." "I feel like my students are just passing time until marriage," wrote one PCV. She added, "I have a hard time convincing them that they have choices they can make concerning their lives." Similarly, a Volunteer commented that it is "very difficult to get the students to think for themselves." Another PCV observed that "Before we came they made it sound like the children would be eager to study English. We have found the exact opposite in the classroom."

Maintaining discipline was a problem for many. A few attributed it to "lack of respect for me as a 'real' teacher." One observed that "Often the kids, no matter what the age, are not able to handle being given responsibility as to what is taught in class." After noting that "half the students don't have books," another PCV complained that "the boys burn the floor and the erasers and the maps and their books in the stoves just for fun." The widespread use of corporal punishment offended one PCV: "I do not think it is a viable option to hit children and use other strict methods. I do not feel you should stoop to the level of physical violence."

Several PCVs found lesson planning difficult because of the "multiple levels in the classroom." Those levels were described both in terms of chronological age and academic ability. PCVs found that their training did not adequately prepare them for heterogeneous classrooms: "Just when I thought I had acquired the knack of lesson planning, it became twice as hard this semester because one of my groups has many students of varying ability."

Moreover, many PCVs were discouraged by differences between the instructional strategies presented during training and those favored by most building teachers. One wrote: "They like grammar, translation and irrelevant topics (travelling by boat?!!!) and distrust conversation." Training had stressed the need to vary instructional delivery. PCVs were encouraged to employ different grouping strategies, but most found innovations difficult. One wrote, "We have the traditional bench/desks which make it difficult to do group work or discussions." Another wrote, "I'm surprised by the constant energy and creativity the job demands. I only have to plan one lesson a week (which I repeat 9 times) and even that can be a challenge."

Volunteers found their professional relationships difficult as well. Comments here ranged from "Inconsistent expe ctations from administrators" to "The other English teachers told everyone I am a bad teacher." Probably most typical was this observation: "It's hard to come up with interesting, informative lessons without any materials or help from the other teachers at my school."

Not surprisingly, the cultural context was often confusing. A few attributed this in part to lack of fluency in Armenian: "It is hard to teach English to students when you don't know their native language well enough to communicate rules and ideas." Several mentioned puzzling cultural values. Local indifference to cheating, for example, was a theme in several surveys (Burnley, 1997). One PCV noted that "One of the greatest challenges has been dealing with a different view regarding cheating. The students are used to cheating openly without a problem and view it more as 'helping.'" Another PCV complained that, "No matter what you grade a certain student, the grade might get changed because the student is related to the principal."

A frequent theme was the contrast between American and Armenian attitudes toward education. One PCV said, "I seem to have different and maybe higher expectations of my students in the classroom." Other comments resembled this PCV's observation that "School is not nearly as important as we

'Americans' think it is." Similarly, a Volunteer complained about the "lack of student participation, family participation or school disinterest," adding that "It is a challenge to go to a place everyday where no one cares that you have traveled 9,000 miles to see them and work with them."

All teaching assignments were in schools that need structural repair. Descriptions of physical challenges cited "inadequate facilities," such as lack of heat, electricity or functional bathrooms. Several noted that furniture was broken or nailed to the floor, limiting classroom management options. Some cited lack of adequate curricular resources: "Half the students don't have books." One PCV noted that teaching materials "available in Armenia are extremely old. In order to really develop my students' skills I've had to bring lots of materials from the USA."

Perceptions of Training Preparation

Fifty-four statements focused on training preparation. Of them 24 were positive. From these, four areas of strength emerged (see Figure 2). Many comments indicated that the "most valuable part of training was hearing [working] volunteers' first hand experiences." One PCV explained that "hearing current and former volunteers' stories" helped her cope with similar situations. The student teaching practicum was also cited as a strength in many questionnaires. One PCV wanted "more hands on experiences" because "the

Figure 2. Peace Corps Volunteers' perceptions of training preparation.

Strengths:

- Shared experiences of former Volunteers
- Practicum
- Emphasis on need to be flexible
- Cognitive understanding of educational theory

Weaknesses:

- Instructional planning
  Too much focus on educational theory
  Teaching methods impractical
  Little preparation for multi-level classrooms
- Management and motivation of students
  Little attention to discipline problems
  No techniques for motivating students
- Cultural context
  History behind the culture never presented
  Understanding attitudes and values
  No specifically Armenia-related training manuals

practicum was great!" Another commented that the practicum "gave me time to experiment in the classroom and find out what works and what doesn't."

The remaining positive comments concerned the "different and innovative methods" introduced during training. Ironically, these methods were also criticized: "The least valuable part was the initial focus on educational theories." One observation that "These theories were not helpful because they were not applicable to this cultural situation" was a belief shared in many responses. One PCV observed, however, that training "gave me a basic understanding of lesson planning and classroom management. I found it very useful in understanding different teaching methods and teaching procedures."

Several PCVs were also grateful for training emphasis on the need to be flexible. One attributed this strength to the central role former Armenia TEFL volunteers had played in "creating our training program." Several surveys agreed with this Volunteer's belief that "Training gave me a basic sense of other volunteers' classroom experiences, especially relating to discipline problems and both effective and ineffective solutions." In fact, he concludes: "The most valuable part of training was hearing volunteers' firsthand experiences." But as one PCV aptly noted, "My PC training has helped, but I wouldn't know what to ask for. The needs change daily. As if every day I need to start over." In a similar vein, another wrote: "I can't imagine anything I COULD have been told that would have been more valuable than the actual experience."

Thirty responses identified training weaknesses. Perhaps not surprisingly, these were found in the three areas of greatest frustration: lesson planning, students, and cultural context (see Figure 2). Comments about lesson planning included the need for more focus on classroom management, curriculum development and identifying appropriate instructional goals. Many PCVs noted the disparity between theory and practice. One plaintive comment observed that while information was provided on discipline and on managing a multilevel classroom, "REALITY [sic] is so much different." Similarly, a PCV explained that training emphasized "teaching through different methods—games, making learning fun. I agree that this is the best way to learn, however, any attempt to employ this in the classroom has failed miserably. The class ends up completely out of control."

PCVs also felt unprepared for the cultural environment. Specific comments noted that "Cross cultural sessions did not teach culture, but we got to see the Armenian perspective on their culture." Peace Corps had "some good advice" about cheating, but dealing with this recurrent problem was "mostly . . . just a matter of trial and error." PCVs were confused by local attitudes and uncertain about how to maintain culturally-sensitive behavior when faced with incompatible values. One survey noted that some of the training materials Volunteers received had been prepared for African TEFL volunteers. A few PCVs felt they had not been helped to "understand the history behind the culture we are in."

In the following passage, a PCV refers to twin challenges cited by many Volunteers: lack of material resources and the pervasive influence of Soviet educational practices on the Armenian school system. Her observations underscore the critical importance of sociocultural context in teaching:

> "For the most part PC training was a disappointment. They gave us ideas and lesson plans that are great in theory, but they seem to forget that we don't have the access to teaching materials, and making our own materials can be problematic with our limited resources and funds. I'd have to be able to make Xerox copies for all my students since they don't have books, but I can't afford to . . . In one technical session about discipline problems, it was suggested that we engage our students in the rule-making process i.e., by asking them what kinds of rules they would like to have in their classroom. In theory that would be a great idea, but . . . in Armenia we are up against an archaic system in which students don't express their own thoughts – individuality and creativity are NOT encouraged! So how do I come in as a young, inexperienced foreigner and try to implement new ideas and methods . . ."

PCVs' Recommendations to Increase Teaching Effectiveness

From their perspective as novice practitioners, PCVs saw five ways their teaching efforts could be supported (see Figure 3). Interestingly, the first two extend beyond the training period and suggest the need of novice teachers for a supportive professional community. One noted, "It would be constructive to get together with teachers in similar grades and situations." Other PCVs wrote related comments, including "REAL, active ongoing training" and "More TEFL teacher meetings after and during the teaching years."

Figure 3. Peace Corps Volunteers' recommendations to increase teaching effectiveness

1. Regular and frequent interaction with other Volunteers and with Armenian classroom teachers.
2. Ongoing professional development opportunities.
3. Additional field experiences.
4. Focus training on specific age/grade levels.

PCVs also felt a need for professional resources such as an "English resource center specifically for teachers." Several thought preservice training should contain more field experiences. This PCV's comment is typical of many: "The lecture style training did not help in the classroom. I much preferred and later reflected on the hands-on approach and the volunteers' accounts."

Discussion

All teaching occurs in unique and dynamic contexts that challenge experienced as well as novice teachers. This is particularly true for Peace Corps TEFL volunteers whose first teaching experience happens in a wholly new and foreign culture. Moreover, PCVs lack the in-depth training enjoyed by their American-based peers. Given limitations imposed by these differences in teaching context and length of preparation, specific results of this study cannot be generalized to large populations. Indeed, qualitative studies are not designed for this purpose (Merriam,1988). But we find it significant that the teaching challenges identified by these PCVs have also been raised by preservice and novice teachers in other settings (Kagan, 1992).

In a seminal review that compared forty studies on the professional development of beginning teachers, for example, Kagan (1992) observed the following:

> Preservice and first-year teaching appears to constitute a single developmental stage during which novices accomplish three primary tasks: (a) acquire personal images of self as teacher; (b) use that knowledge to modify and reconstruct their personal images of self as teacher; and (c) develop standard procedural routines that integrate classroom management and instruction (p.129).

In this survey, PCVs cited "students" and "lesson planning" as their greatest challenges. These areas were also identified as the greatest weaknesses in their preparation, underscoring Kagan's (1992) observation that "In general, preservice programs fail to address these tasks adequately" (p. 129). Similar concerns were raised by Johnson (1994) in a study of the beliefs and practices of post-baccalaureate preservice ESL teachers who "seemed to lack adequate procedural knowledge about how classrooms work and what students are like" despite their university preparation (p. 450).

One argument in favor of alternative teacher preparation has been that non-traditional students augment theoretical training by drawing on prior experience. Each of the teachers in Johnson's (1994) study brought "extensive informal learning experiences" to teacher training (p. 445). Rather than enhancing their practica, however, these experiences appear to have "projected an unrealistic sense of optimism about the type of teacher they would be and what their initial teaching experiences would be like" (p. 445). Furthermore, Johnson found "these teachers' images of themselves as teachers, [of] teaching, and their perceptions of their own instructional practices" were powerfully affected by their prior experiences, even when those images were in conflict with current beliefs about best practice (p. 449).

Johnson's (1994) study, like Kagan's (1992) review, suggests a fragile synergy between understanding students, maintaining classroom procedures and teacher self-image. Curiously, in survey responses PCVs did not seem preoccupied with self-image as teachers. Perhaps their short training or the complex roles they play as American volunteers in a foreign culture mitigated attention to teacher self-image. In any case, their focus was outer-directed, citing practical concerns such as classroom management, student motivation, and instructional routines. To these ends, they found their teaching practicum valuable, but their studies of learning theory and instructional strategies less pertinent.

Upitis (1999) notes that "in order to talk about experiences of teaching, one has to have experiences to talk about" and cites intriguing research that supports the concept of requiring extended field experience before prospective teachers undertake formal course work. Kagan's (1992) review supports the belief that "direct experience appears to be crucial" and teacher education programs need to provide "extended opportunities to interact with and study pupils in systematic ways" (p. 142).

Yet negotiating "systematic" experience may also be problematic. In an analysis of seven studies on participants' views of their field-based teacher education programs, Duquette (1997) discovered that all first-year teachers from elementary on-site programs "expressed a need for more theory," particularly in the "foundational areas" (p. 266). Some of the teachers attributed an initial loss of confidence to "the lack of instruction in theory" (p. 268). Moreover, in programs emphasizing the school-as-community, these novice teachers thought they had not been prepared adequately for "solo teaching" (p. 268).

In fact, the issue of whether to privilege theory or practice in teacher education may be paradoxical. When Whitehead and Hutchinson (1999) gave exit evaluations to 53 novice teachers who had been prepared in a restructured, field-based teacher education program, they found "two important themes." One was "the value of the experiential nature of the program" while "the other main theme was a desire not to be required to learn from experience, from peers, and from associate teachers alone." In fact, students wanted more "substantive 'theoretical' input from faculty members, especially in the areas of curriculum planning, classroom management, discipline, and student assessment." Similarly, the PCVs found their study of teaching theory both a strength and a weakness. Moreover, like the PCVs, beginning teachers in Whithead, Hutchinson, and Munby's study (1999) felt underprepared in their understanding of students and of classroom routines for effective delivery of instruction.

One striking theme in these surveys is the need to understand the role of culture in student life. PCVs were bewildered, for example, by their students' perception of the purpose of education. Kitenge N'Gambwa, Educational Program Specialist with the Peace Corps, notes that PCVs "have difficulty understanding the culture of learning of the students in the particular country. The role students play in their own learning. They have a hard time believing that's the mode of education" (personal communication, October 26, 1999).

This difficulty might be expected of Americans teaching in a foreign country. But even novice teachers working in mainstream contexts may not understand the impact of culture on their students' beliefs and behavior. All students operate within a school culture that has both explicit and implicit rules and values. To that school world they bring a unique family culture, one situated in a larger socioethnic community. Students are intimately tied to all these cultures, as reviews of the PCV survey comments demonstrate.

In *The Dreamkeepers*, Ladson-Billings (1994) discusses the complex nature of culture as it impacts African-American learners. She claims that rather than honor and understand the complexity of culture, teacher education programs focus on assimilationist teaching, "a teaching style that operates without regard to the students' particular cultural characteristics" (p. 22).

Teacher education courses currently think of culture in narrow terms, as a "foods-and-festivals" approach to backgrounds different from our own. (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 131). Moreover, mainstream preservice teachers do not see themselves or their experiences as culturally-bound. Consequently, they lack the tools to "challenge their intrinsic assumptions" or to ask the kinds of questions that would illuminate the cultural experience of their students (p. 131). Ladson-Billings (1994) argues convincingly for the importance of culturally-relevant teaching which self-consciously taps into a students' world on all these levels. Moreover, she believes teacher education programs need to develop in-depth educational experiences that help preservice teachers understand both the concept of culture and how it relates to elementary school children.

Kagan's (1992) analysis of studies on practica, internships and student teaching describes features of those experiences that make university guidance difficult:

> The nature of pupils, principals' beliefs, parental attitudes, availability of materials, communication between school and university personnel, attitudes of teachers in a school and the personal relationship that develops between a novice and his or her cooperating teacher. Each intern or student teacher must negotiate many social and political—as well as pedagogical—dilemmas" (pp. 149-50).

We believe that the dilemmas are cultural, as well as social and political. In fact, most of the items cited by Kagan (1992) are woven through the fabric of a school, home or community culture. Ladson-Billings (1994) recommends presenting an expanded understanding of culture in a one-year apprenticeship where "students could see the evolution and development of the classroom over time" (p. 135).

Conclusion

What, then, can be learned from the PCVs' recommendations? We know from research validated by this study that most novice teachers find understanding students and managing the classroom difficult challenges. Research on preservice and novice teacher education also indicates beginning professionals are focused on themselves, struggling to understand who they are as teachers. Moreover, we know that many novices believe their training did not adequately prepare them. Often, those prepared experientially needed more theory; those prepared in decontextualized contexts needed more practice.

Some studies have concluded that early teaching is developmental, with novices passing through certain predictable stages. Wildman and Niles (1987) compare novice teacher development to Piaget's view of learning development, arguing that novice teachers must pass through a stage of "disequilibration" so that efforts to resolve conflicting classroom experiences can result in new understandings. They add, "because experience can be constructed and reconstructed in many ways, the process is rarely ever finished" (p. 6). Similarly, Kagan (1992) believes cognitive dissonance is necessary for novices who must "confront their own beliefs and images and acknowledge that they need adjustment" (p. 163). Berliner (1988) sees the goal of the first-year teacher, whether "entering through traditional or alternative routes" as "muddling through until it all starts making sense, and until some of what is required to run the classroom can be routinized" (p. 61). Even the change process for veteran teachers may be developmental, since they appear to pass through predictable stages when they introduce an innovative method. Initial enthusiasm is soon replaced by concerns centered in the self, the student and classroom management (Hall & Loucks, 1978).

From that perspective, no training could have adequately prepared these TEFL volunteers. Furthermore, new teachers find themselves in unique school contexts where they have to navigate complex interpersonal relationships. Ladson-Billings (1994) suggests we ease first-year teachers into the profession with smaller classes and teaching teams comprised of novice and experienced teachers. Unlike the current solo "sink-or-swim approach," she sees teams working together, developing curricula and instructional strategies that fit their teaching needs (p. 136). Even more, teams would determine their own professional development needs, deciding what they needed to learn and then arranging for "training in those areas" (p. 136).

When we look at the recommendations PCVs made for support, most of them sought opportunities to construct new and deeper understandings that went beyond practica. They wanted ongoing training and a resource center where they might find answers to their professional challenges. They wanted regular interaction with other volunteers and teachers with whom they could learn or be mentored. Interestingly, many of the PCVs who participated in this survey have formed a support group. One volunteer applied for a Peace Corps grant to develop a resource room and provide travel money for monthly meetings. As a result, "TEFLs" now meet regularly to discuss professional issues and share concerns. In fact, their first session began with a needs-assessment based on responses to our questionnaire.

These PCVs have now been teaching for one year. Most appear to have adjusted to their assignments; not one has requested early termination. During a recent visit they spoke warmly of their Armenian students (Newton & Smolen, 2000). Ultimately, analysis of the surveys and related research has left us wondering if teacher preparation programs should reframe the debate between theory and practice. Whether graduates of a traditional or alternative program, most beginning teachers will feel dissonance: teaching is complex. As noted earlier, one PCV wrote of her early teaching, "The needs change daily, as if every day I need to start over." Another observed about training, "I can't imagine anything I COULD have been told that would have been more valuable than the actual experience." Rather than strive for novice teachers who can seamlessly translate theory into practice, perhaps we should strive for novice teachers who wisely understand that teaching is a life-long learning experience.

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Appendix. Peace Corps Volunteer Questionnaire: TEFL Training and Teaching

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Name ____

Home State (USA) ________________________ Age ____________

Degree(s) Earned ____

Undergraduate Major _____________________________________

Minor _____________________________________

Length of Peace Corps Service to Date ______________________

Briefly Describe Teaching Situation (include location and age of students; any unique features of situation)

1. What have been the greatest CHALLENGES you have faced as a teacher?
2. How has your Peace Corps training helped you face these challenges?
3. What, if anything, in your Peace Corps training has not helped you face these challenges?
4. What kind of support would help you be more successful in this teaching experience?
5. Additional comments on your training/teaching experience in Armenia? Has anything especially surprised, disappointed, pleased you? Please note.

LESSONS IN TEACHER EDUCATION: WHAT WE LEARN FROM OVERSEAS

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Abstract

The four authors, three Americans and one Czech, are involved in various literacy programs abroad, and from their four very different perspectives describe and discuss what learning they, or in the case of the Irish program, their students, are able to bring back to their home institutions. The authors suggest that there is an enormous value to these experiences because literacy practices, beliefs, and values are made visible, that there is a developmental nature to this kind of learning, and that literacy educators have much to contribute to research and understanding of international and comparative education.

> We must learn many things from you [Americans] , from how to educate our offspring and how to elect our representatives, to how to organize our economic life so that it will lead to prosperity and not poverty. But this doesn't have to be merely assistance from the well-educated, the powerful, and the wealthy to those who have nothing to offer in return. We, too, can offer something to you: our experience and the knowledge that has come from it.
>
> —Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech Republic,
> in an address to the US Congress

In recent years, socio-political and socio-cultural researchers have emphasized that literacy practices are firmly entrenched in time and place, that reading and writing practices in school are context-bound, and that community expectations and the knowledge that children bring with them to school shape the literacy situation (Delpit, 1988; Harste, 1985; Heath, 1983; Lipson & Wixson, 1997). Why, then, should we spend time analyzing international programs that attempt to share literacy practices with teachers from around the globe? Why look at literacy practices from other parts of the world when contexts can be so very different than our own, or economic and political situations can call for a kind of schooling and curricula that do not transfer to our own situations?

Some educators suggest that we spend our efforts learning instead from exemplary programs within the United States. Perhaps we have more to learn from looking at programs that we can interpret through our own socio-cultural constructs, or at least from those that are not wildly different. Others suggest that if we must look at what is happening in literacy education around the world, why not look at how the US stacks up against other countries in terms of achievements and abilities to read and write, through IEA and OECD studies? Why not rank and sort teachers' and students' performances to see who serves their children best and then analyze the tests (Bracey, 1996; Walberg, 1996)?

There is a narrowness to both of those answers. The four educators who have jointly written this paper explore what can be learned from another country's literacy education and ways of teaching because we believe that we do not have all the answers for how best to teach our own children—although given a larger perspective, we believe that we can find them. We can learn from others' ways of teaching literacy if we take into account the choices they have made given their contexts. We have joined voices to write about our own involvement in international literacy programs and to explore what we have learned. We use the term teacher education loosely because the two programs we are involved in, Slippery Rock's international student teaching program and the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Project, expose preservice and practicing teachers—especially ourselves— to other ways of teaching literacy.

We write as four educators who teach on both sides of the Atlantic, as participants in two different international programs with completely different goals, as people who are bringing home very different lessons to our own classrooms. Yet all of us are convinced of the importance of our various programs and speak with terms such as "transformation," "life-changing," and "new ways to think about education." The common thread to our understandings is this: international programs that allow teachers to observe literacy education elsewhere provide new ways of thinking about literacy, some broad and mind-altering understandings and some small and immediately applicable, and provide new perspectives about "otherness," of how to see ourselves and others in a less myopic light.

West, Jarchow and Quisenberry (1996) claim that knowing and understanding the educational research and practices of other countries "clarify and deepen insight into our own ability to ask pivotal questions about our own practice. If one knows and understands the raison d'etre of a given educational practice in America, but not how the practice is considered in other parts of the globe, one could get the idea that the practice is important throughout the world. If actually so, this understanding contributes to a personal knowledge of a rather universal practice in teacher education. If not actually so, one develops some understanding of how and why the practice is culturally specific" (p. 1048). Surely that was the lesson Heath taught us on a domestic level about parents reading to children at bedtime (1983). Cultural contexts of literacy education affect myriad aspects of classroom practices. Children, their parents and communities, as well as teachers and administrators, have beliefs about both what literacy entails and how best to teach it (Peshkin, 1992). These beliefs and the accompanying valuing are usually tacit, invisible and viewed as "common sense" rather than socially constructed belief systems (Berger & Luckman, 1966). However, a culture's common sense can usually be more easily seen as social construction to an outsider. And shifting social mores, educational opportunities, travel or other arbiters of cognitive dissonance may enable even cultural insiders to see other viable ways of organizing and valuing literacy instruction (Giroux & McLaren, 1986).

It is with these perspectives and Havel's words in mind that four literacy educators consider recent overseas experiences and reflect on the applications of that learning to our own situated literacy practices. Webster's fifth definition (1972) for *to learn* is "to acquire, as a habit or attitude," and it is in that sense that the four of us respond to the question "What can be learned from international programs about the way we and others teach literacy?" Since anything can be observed but many things cannot be transported back, we also considered the negative of that question: "What can't be learned?"

Lee Williams, from Slippery Rock University, travels annually with a group of students to Dublin, and supervises American students teaching in Irish schools. Sarah Nixon-Ponder, an educator who has had diverse experiences living abroad, travels to Bulgaria twice a year with the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking program (hereafter RWCT) to work with the same group of 30 Bulgarian educators. Patricia Bloem and her family lived in the former Czechoslovakia, and now volunteers with the RWCT program, working with Czech teachers who span first grade through college. The three Americans are joined by Petr Novotny, a Czech professor who formerly taught at a specialized high school and now teaches at Masaryk University in Brno. Novotny participates in the RWCT program as a Czech teacher who is in the process of rethinking his own pedagogy and on recent trips has observed a variety of American schools.

Lee Williams: International Student Teaching—Americans in Ireland

For more than fifteen years students at Slippery Rock University who have completed their student teaching during the fall semester have been able to apply for a program that allows them to spend eight weeks student teaching in Irish schools. These students are housed with Irish families and placed with Irish teachers who volunteer to have an American student in their classroom in schools. Most of the elementary placements are in National Schools affiliated with a local Roman Catholic parish in the suburbs of Dublin.

While not every classroom and school is the same, the schools in which Americans are placed have commonalities. First, the suburban population they serve is mostly middle-class, homogeneous in religion, social class and in some schools, gender. A young and growing population means that many more children are enrolled in school each year, and the classrooms were not built to handle the current numbers. They are very crowded, with over thirty students in a room. Students are expected to provide their own paper, books, supplies, and school uniforms.

The primary classrooms have few books. The reading program focuses on the "Letter People," a program which explicitly teaches each letter name, each letter sound and provides practice with letter people books. Teachers use commercial worksheets for both skill development and practice during class time. Teachers read aloud to children, especially to keep them quiet or entertained during a lull in the day. However, children are required to read with parents for at least a half-hour each night, and parents send in signed acknowledgments to the teacher each day attesting to their child's home reading. In the intermediate grades, students write lessons in their "copies," small softbound notebooks, usually written responses to specific questions or reader response-oriented writings. They often read a type of young adult novel as a class—usually in round robin fashion, although they are assigned passages and responses for homework as well. The curriculum is teacher-centered, worksheet oriented and focused on the basics of numeracy and literacy. However, there is enough time for Irish dancing, Irish language, singing and practicing for the school play each day.

Special education and remediation are almost non-existent in these particular schools (although some children, if placed in a U.S. school, would have undoubtedly been identified as needing special intervention). However, teachers and principals are becoming more aware of their need to accommodate children of varying needs and are beginning to pull children out of class to work on reading. The observed skill instruction is mainly in extra word and phonics-based workbook pages.

For many of the student teachers, being in Ireland was the first experience of spending a significant amount of time away from their families and the places where they had grown up. They saw issues in black or white, good or bad, like home or different from home. It would be rare in the United States to find a suburban, middle class public school district that had the same lack of space or funds as the Irish schools we visited, and even suburban schools in the United States have more diversity than was apparent in the Irish schools in which we taught. However, the US students did not see the lack of diversity. Comments like this one by Joelle were common: "The Irish system must be really good . . . All of those children read, even with just using worksheets." Joelle did not notice, however, that parents willingly read with their children each night as a school requirement. Nor was she familiar with the rich literary history of the Irish and the cultural value placed on language facility, including reading and writing. Nor did the US students focus on the issues of context that theorists underscore as necessary for successful literacy instruction—that of understanding one's students, their prior experiences and knowledge, and the expectations of their parents, all as instrumental in shaping school experience.

Because most of the American students are in their early twenties and because most have never been outside of their home community, they have little sense of the constructedness of their own culture and are only beginning to understand the complexities of literacy teaching. They have little ownership over the theory and practices they have learned in their methods classes in United States classrooms, let alone in an international setting. Thus, they lack the reflectiveness to sort through their experiences with an eye to understanding the underlying cultural and social influences.

Typically, their Irish cooperating teachers leave them alone in the classroom, as that was the model of teacher education they had experienced. This lack of supervision by cooperating teachers and difficulty in reflecting on the meaning of culture has led some of my US colleagues to question the usefulness of the Irish student teaching experience. Student teachers are certainly not experiencing a typical classroom of any public school in the United States. They cannot teach most of the morning's subjects—Irish and religion.

However, every student who completes the experience reports that they have had a "life-changing" experience. Most important is the chance to look back on the experience from home. They become aware that they often did not understand the nuances and rhythms of daily life in Ireland. They begin to understand the constructed nature of their expectations about life—what is important, why it is important and how the "good life" might be lived. They have an increased sense of the importance of knowing the history of their own country and community. They have not gotten better at teaching reading, but they have begun to expand their idea about what can be read—some of the Irish fondness for poetry and story telling and history catches them as well. Perhaps the students do not learn about literacy teaching in specific—although I have—but they certainly learn about life in general.

The RWCT program in Eastern Europe

The RWCT program, an international project that promotes school reform through a change in pedagogy, is supported by the Soros Foundation and the International Reading Association. The program grew out of a question asked by the Slovak Minister for Education when on a visit to the United States: How do you teach democracy? He happened to ask the question of a group of literacy professors; their answer was that you teach democracy not by teaching a civics class but rather by teaching critical thinking (Temple, 1997). Based on ideas of cooperative learning, critical thinking, and whole language, and on theorists such as Freire, Vgotsky, Dewey, and Rosenblatt, this train-the-trainers program started with 9 Eastern European countries and 40 volunteers from the US and Canada. It subsequently expanded to include 20 Central and Eastern European and Central Asian countries with 80 volunteers from the US, Canada, Australia, and Great Britain

Sarah Nixon-Ponder: Education in Bulgaria

Eastern European educators come to their knowledge of education from a centuries-long tradition of educating the elite, from a lifespan of hard-earned experience teaching and learning under the former regimes, and more recently, from multiple efforts at school reform. Claiming and demonstrating extremely high literacy rates, they have knowledge and understanding that Americans need. Bulgaria has a long history of education and literacy. The Cyrillic alphabet was created by brothers Cryil and Methodius in the 9th century, and over the many centuries, Bulgarians have fostered a fierce desire for learning. An American visitor to a Bulgarian classroom would probably see the teacher at center stage, would observe the students listening quietly, intent on memorizing information, and engaged in what some Eastern European teachers refer to disparagingly as "factology," although at a level that often amazes Western visitors.

What parts of Bulgarian education are not transferable to the United States? Primary and secondary education in Bulgaria consists of a very structured, centralized system. A central curriculum exists that is strictly adhered to throughout Bulgaria. Curriculum and texts are the same in the capital of Sofia as they are in the seaport of Varna. Teachers are expected to follow this curriculum, and the Ministry of Education's Inspectors visit classes regularly to insure compliance. These external structures do not transfer or translate well into the US system.

But there are many wonderful aspects of Bulgarian education from which teachers in the United States can learn. First, Bulgarians exhibit a love and desire for acquisition of knowledge, as well as a deep respect for education and teachers. Bulgarian students take their education very seriously and treat it as their number one job and occupation. Bulgarian teachers are equally serious about their vocations. In many parts of Bulgaria, teachers work for months without receiving any compensation. Nevertheless, teachers develop a close rapport with their students. In the primary grades, teachers work with the same group of 20 students for four years, from first grade through fourth grade. Galina Vassileva Ivanova, a primary teacher in Pleven, remarked, "These are not just my students; they are my children, my babies" (Personal Communication, October, 1999).

Second, Bulgarian students study subjects and content areas in much more depth than do most students in the United States. Whereas curriculum in the States focuses more on covering a large amount of information with relatively little depth, Bulgarian students tend to study a subject in a deeper, more concentrated and intense manner. For example, Bulgarian high school students in ninth grade begin studying ethics and philosophy in depth. From my observation in Georgi Radev's classes in Sofia, the material covered and discussed in these classes is comparable to ethics and philosophy courses taught in our colleges and universities.

The Bulgarian commitment to intense foreign language acquisition stands in stark contrast to how we approach foreign language learning in the US educational system. Bulgarian students study several foreign languages throughout their educational careers. The Ministry of Education has recently mandated that all students begin studying English in the first grade. In fourth grade, students will start to study another language, such as German, Italian, French, Spanish, or Russian. In seventh grade, another language is added, and again in ninth grade. Special language schools are the most popular choice for students and parents. In these schools, half of the students' classes are taught in the foreign language of the school while the remainder of the classes are taught in Bulgarian. For example, after two years in Violeta Tsoneva's intensive English class in a German language high school, her students are able to easily converse with English-speaking visitors and read and write at a level comparable to our high school students' English language ability.

Finally, those Bulgarian teachers involved in the RWCT program show a high level of intensity and commitment to educational reform. Many have verbalized their belief that Bulgaria's forward movement into a global society will heavily depend on the new skills their students learn. Factology is not enough: students need to possess the ability to think critically, solve problems, and make decisions. RWCT teachers enthusiastically began to infuse critical thinking strategies into their courses after the first 30 hour RWCT workshop. For example, my teammate and I observed two teachers' classrooms immediately after the first workshop. Anelia Dimitrova Andonova implemented a brainstorming activity into her first-grade literacy lesson; Georgi Radev's tenth-grade ethics class experienced brainstorming, think-pair-share, and used the INSERT strategy as they read their ethics text. The Bulgarians teachers' willingness to immediately implement new teaching strategies into their lessons was impressive.

Patricia Bloem: Education in the Czech Republic

There are certain structural elements of Czech education that essentially cannot and should not be replicated in the United States. For example, the Czech Republic heavily tracks its student. After testing around age 13, students are diverted into various schools such as vocational/trade schools, apprenticeship programs, or the universities. At various points students may be encouraged to join the workforce or perhaps to attend a business school which incorporates the last few years of high school with two more years of specialized education. The lack of freedom to float from one type of education to another and the necessity to make a life-determining decision at a young age would be frowned on by much of American society.

Also, the Czech Republic, along with many of the Eastern European countries, has educational structures beyond the schools that are fully supported by the State. Arts and music and sports are an integral part of children's lives, not an extra, because the programs are essentially free to all. As wonderful as that sounds for the United States, structures that fit a country of 10 million can not be translated systematically into a country of 260 million.

So what can we learn from Czech teachers? Based on my experiences of sending my children to public school in Czechoslovakia and of volunteering in RWCT in the Czech Republic, there are two things American literacy teachers can learn. First, we must understand that to *teach* literacy in a democracy means to *model* democracy through our teaching. I'm not advocating a specific method or saying that a worksheet or the study of phonics can't be democratic. Rather, I'm arguing that there are habits of mind, for example, questioning, critical thinking, and multiple perspectives, all of which belong in classrooms that nurture and produce democratic citizens. It is the intentional use of these strategies to promote democratic practices that the Czech RWCT teachers are modeling, and that, I would argue, American teachers rarely think about. In part, Czech RWCT teachers are rejoicing that they can leave behind their roles of teaching factology. Josef, a high school literature teacher from Chomutov reveled in his new role when he announced, "I have met the spiritual leader of RWCT! I've been reading Ibsen who said, 'It is my job to ask questions. I know no answers.'"

The RWCT Czech teachers (by now there are more than two hundred who have participated in the project) are deliberately *not* replicating the education they themselves experienced as students. They know the negative sides of teaching, know the failings of a system that taught them to memorize very well and become passive in the process. They are aware of the pull of experience, and that the ways of the traditional transmission-model of education die hard. Thus they want to infuse their literacy teaching with strategies such as the DR-TA, discussion webs, cooperative learning groups, the writing process, and debate so that they model democracy through their teaching. They are making overt connections between the ways they teach and the kinds of citizens they are helping to produce. These connections may be implicit in American education, but rarely do American teachers reflect on teaching for democracy in such explicit ways.

Second, at this moment in our own political history, American literacy teachers should take caution that we too do not allow our voices to become silenced as Czech teachers' voices once were silenced. As Havel states in the epigraph beginning this chapter, we have much to learn from the Czech experience. In their experiences during the years of Socialism, schools were controlled by the politicians and bureaucrats. Of course some of the teachers were excellent, connecting to students and their emotional needs, pushing them to learn, to accomplish, to become well educated and knowledgeable. But teaching, particularly after the late 60s, when the Soviet tanks rumbled down the streets of Prague, was not a job for a creative professional who wanted students to learn to reason for themselves. Rather, it became a job for a technician, for someone who could take orders, for someone who would implement a curriculum devised by the authorities. The knowledge that the Czechs have gained from their experiences has been bitter fruit.

After the euphoria that came with bringing down the old political system in Eastern Europe, and amidst the disillusionment associated with a difficult economy, some Czech educators are rolling up shirtsleeves, problem solving, and learning how to define community and responsibility differently. Bozena Blazkova, one of the few school librarians in the country, talks about her attempts to bring parents into the schools for parent-child reading programs, a previously unheard of event in her Pardubice elementary school. Educators have formed their first-ever grass roots reform movement for teachers of 1st grade through university. Despite the discouragement of the limping economies and the struggles to find good leadership, much of Eastern Europe knows that they are still in the process of remaking themselves, that being only a decade from their denunciation of communism, they still are working at finding and shaping a vision. In this environment, the teacher as an agent for change is an exciting idea.

Clearly the political moment for Czech teachers is quite different from ours. Now Czech teachers face greater freedom than in the past, although with fewer resources at their disposal. In contrast, many American teachers find their professional universe contracting to the scope of the latest mandated testing program. Each week American teachers tell me about a freedom they have lost. A veteran Catholic school teacher called to tell me she will no longer be teaching a vibrant literature unit because her new principal insists that choice must be eliminated and all students must read the same books. Some of my local public schools have not only mandated the use of basals but now provide a script, adapted by grade level, which all teachers must read from when teaching language arts. Teachers within my metropolitan area feel bullied by politicians, administrators, and a public that is demanding higher test scores at the expense of significant learning and teaching. According to Patrick Shannon (1990), American teachers have actually lost ground during this century in terms of being able to plan and implement literacy lessons that they feel will best serve their students. Too many of us are beginning to feel like technicians.

We need to learn how to speak out for what we believe is right in literacy education, quietly to put ourselves on the offense, to reclaim our classrooms and do what is best for our students. We do not have to be forced into uncomfortable pedagogical practices by politicians who do not understand how children learn. We can find a way to shape our own visions and find our own solutions. We can learn from the Czech experience.

Petr Novotny: The Application of American Education in the Czech Republic

Recently I was asked to prepare a four-hour course for students who were planning to begin university studies. I asked them first to recall several instances where their learning was very successful, and reflect on that learning. I demonstrated several new strategies for them to use as they study and learn, and they participated actively. But then a girl asked, "Why do you want me to ask my own questions? Why do you want me to think about myself in this learning and want me to think about a process? I know there are people who have the answers to the questions, experts who know much more than I do. Why don't we just think about their answers?" Her opinion divided students into two factions, those who wanted to learn the answers and those who wanted to think about the process and about how to ask their own questions. We started talking about history, and about what are good questions to ask about historical facts, and then we moved on.

I think that story shows what school reform in my country is about. In my country in the past—and still too often today—a good teacher gave out a lot of information, and the students who did well learned all the right answers. But there are other ways to think about education. What we can learn from Americans, what we are learning from RWCT, are new ways to think about education.

What are those new ways? One is how to offer students time and space to answer their own questions. Students must think about how they learn and reflect on what they learn in the classroom. Reflection takes time that teachers should provide. Another way is to realize that children control their own learning. Somebody once said that democracy is not anarchy, but self-control. I think this means control *of* self but also *by* self. The idea that students are in control of their learning, that an education is not something that happens to you, was not practiced or accepted before now.

We are not learning the answers from the Americans and from RWCT. We are finding our own answers. We are also learning how to ask our own questions that arise from our Czech situation. We are asking, for example, How can we improve the participation of all students? How can we learn to be silent and let pupils talk? Is it necessary that all children participate on group work? How do we make that happen? Our curriculum is overflowing. Do we have enough time to use critical thinking methods every day?

The RWCT program started in the Czech Republic three years ago. Some participants, advanced and experienced teachers, thought they would simply improve their teaching through a few new methods and strategies and that there were not many things they needed to change for improvement. But during the RWCT workshops they experienced a shift from seeing RWCT as instructional innovation to much more, to enjoying RWCT as a broader framework for their teaching. These participants, who are now working to change our schools, are thinking beyond instructional innovation. The transformation of student and teacher relationships, classroom atmosphere, and teacher and student roles is as important as other innovations. So we learn from the United States how to transform our schools and our education in ways that make sense and fit our country.

Conclusions

In reflecting on our own learning and listening to each other's experiences and very different reflections, we are struck again by the phrase "life-changing experience," since it aptly sums up how we feel about our overseas learning. Seeing how literacy educators conduct their work in other countries, even if through the cloudy lenses of our own cultures, is invaluable because it reveals to us new ways of improving our own teaching (Stigler & Hiebert, 1997). For that reason alone universities and departments of literacy and teaching should promote programs that give students and teachers opportunities to study literacy practices abroad.

In all four cases, the authors have found that our engagement in these international literacy programs has forced us to rethink our own practices. When helping teachers teach a new way, the constructedness of context and how it impacts learning and teaching become visible, visible with a clarity that is not present when one relies on common sense or on the way it has always been done. In the case of student teachers in Ireland, the issue is how to help young teachers become aware that teaching practices "work" when they match community expectations and the learner's ability to become literate. Likewise, in the case of teaching critical thinking and literacy in Eastern Europe, the background, expectations, and experiences of the teachers both support and hinder their ability to develop a new way of being in a classroom. Instruction that works for one set of expectations may not work for another. Thus our experiences overseas cause us to look more clearly at questions such as "How do children learn?" and "What is appropriate practice?"

Second, we need to build into this kind of learning plenty of opportunity for reflection, before, during and after the experiences. As literacy teachers, we know well the power of the journal, of the one-page response paper, and of the discussion group. But how rigorous are we in demanding that our students solidify new learning by making connections through their personal reflections or that we ourselves reflect on new learning, then turn our experiences into publications?

We are struck, as we listen to each other and read each other's words, how clearly developmental in nature these overseas experiences are, how tied they are to one's sense of self and to the ability to look at one's culture with some detachment. The examples from Slippery Rock remind us of our college years and our first times abroad, when so many judgments were "us versus them," when we were quick to make pronouncements. This is not to suggest that the learning of those college students is minimal or not important. But complexities of literacy learning and teaching may not easily be observed by a first-time visitor. To learn from international perspectives and to apply that learning may take repeated visits, much exposure and reflection, maturity and growth in seeing who we are as individuals and as teachers.

Finally, we are excited about what this paper shows about the possibilities for literacy educators to grasp important truths of international and comparative education. Much of this branch of education has involved blockbuster studies such as the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), or in literacy, the IEA studies on writing designed in part by the late literacy educator, Alan C. Purves. In the final analysis, these big, expensive studies are about ranking and sorting; the quantitative data is divorced from the contexts in which they were gathered, and their conclusions are unsatisfying for those of us eager to learn from international colleagues and programs. The TIMSS Video Study was a step up, since it examined a variety of teaching processes with the hope of improving student learning (Stigler & Hiebert,1997). However, literacy educators, especially those with a bent for qualitative research, need to dip our oars in these waters, need to help set a research direction so that we acquire information that will truly be helpful to our knowledge. We need to set our own agendas for research that addresses the kinds of learning that can transfer from one country to the next, for understanding that can make a positive difference.

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TECHNOLOGICAL HORIZONS IN LITERACY EDUCATION

MENTORING IN THE INFORMATION AGE: A STUDY OF TELEMENTOR FUNCTIONS BETWEEN PRESERVICE TEACHERS AND MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study examines the functions of telementors in an email interchange between university preservice teachers and middle school students. The participants were 24 preservice secondary English teachers, enrolled in a teaching reading course at a large university in the mountain west and 29 seventh grade students from a rural middle school. The preservice teachers were engaged in a semester-long exchange as "email buddies" for the purpose of mentoring the middle grade students in reading and writing activities. Data was triangulated from the telementoring email correspondence, journal entries, and interviews. The functions of telementors were compared to those of traditional mentors, discovering two new functions of telementors. "Fostering a Trusting Environment" and "Developing a Reciprocal Relationship." These findings underscore the emotional nature of mentoring relationships. In order for the mentoring relationship to develop, telementors must first create a trusting environment through the medium of online communication.

Mentoring is one of the biggest catch-words in education today. It appears that everyone, from remedial students to new faculty, wants to be involved in a mentoring program. But what exactly *is* mentoring? How can we adequately define this term? Scholars agree that mentoring can influence student learning; however, there is little agreement on how this is to be accomplished. While studies of mentoring include some attempt to define what mentoring is, these definitions vary widely. Furthermore, the recent use of telementoring, or mentoring over the Internet, has further complicated the picture. The purpose of this article is to examine the definition and functions of telementoring between preservice teachers and students in the middle school.

Theoretical Framework

Within the field of education, the definition of mentoring must be separated from tutoring and other forms of assisted help. Some researchers, including Yamamoto (1988), denounce the indiscriminate use of the word "mentoring" to mean everything from "remedial tutorials for academic deficiency" to "apprenticeships for career advancement" (p. 188). Current definitions of mentoring within education often fail to take the differences of mentoring versus tutoring into account. Though these activities display similar functions, most mentoring studies assert that there are fundamental contrasts between tutoring and mentoring. Table 1 delineates some of these differences.

Table 1: Mentoring Versus Tutoring

ATTRIBUTE	MENTORING	TUTORING
Focus	Academic progress coupled with life skills	Academic progress only
Mode	A one-to-one relationship that stays constant	A one-to-several relationship with the tutor changing from time to time
Location	Often outside the classroom	During class time
Involvement	Becomes involved personally/ displays attachment	Maintains a professional demeanor/no emotional attachment
Duration	Several months/years	A few weeks or until the student accomplishes the task at hand

Adapted from Sinclair Goodlad, *Mentoring and Tutoring by Students*, 1998.

The overall objectives of the mentor differ fundamentally from those of the tutor. The mentor invests personally in his or her protégé over an extended period of time, whereas the tutor merely assists the student to accomplish the task at hand.

Jacobi (1991) claims that mentoring relationships contain five basic components. For her, mentoring relationships: (1) are helping relationships which focus on achievement; (2) provide emotional and psychological support, career and professional, development, and role models; (3) benefit both the mentor and the protégé; (4) are personal; and (5) allow more experienced people to share knowledge with less-experienced people (p. 513).

Approaches to Mentoring

Past research on academic mentoring can be categorized as belonging to one of two paradigms: a cognitive approach, which takes an objective viewpoint or a social approach which examines mentoring from a more holistic perspective.

Cognitive Approach. For the purpose of this study, we have defined research which views mentoring from an assessment-based, objective point of view as taking a cognitive approach. Within this cognitive approach, scholars use quantitative research techniques to conduct surveys and gather statistics. For example, Howard-Vital and Morgan (1993) developed a "brief, pilot survey" in order to "develop more insight into the mentoring experiences of African-American women in higher education" (p. 5). Likewise, many of the definitions within this approach seem similar to Lester and Johnson (see Blackwell, 1989; Parkay, 1988; Phillips-Jones, 1982; Schulz, 1995; Zey, 1984) who define mentoring as "a one-to-one learning relationship between an older person and a younger person that is based on modeling behavior and extended dialogue between them" (quoted. in Jacobi p. 507). These studies focus on the measurable outcomes of mentoring.

Some of these scholars assert that mentoring includes modeling desired behaviors. For example, Parkay (1988) defines mentoring as "an intensive one-to-one form of teaching in which the wise and experienced mentor inducts the aspiring protégé into a particular . . . way of life" (p. 196). Assessment-based approaches allow scholars to objectively compare mentoring to other personal relationships. It helps the scholar to better understand, in a quantitative sense, the outcomes and realities of mentoring.

Social Approach. Though fewer in number, several studies criticize cognitively-based attempts to define mentoring (Gehrke, 1988; Yamamoto, 1988), claiming that "objectivity and precision are not quite appropriate to this matter of the heart" (Gehrke, p. 190). These scholars take a more social view of the mentoring process, focusing on the emotions and feelings of both the protégé and the mentor. For example, after synthesizing definitions from numerous studies, Peper (1994) concludes that "the mentor and protégé relationship [is] one where a high degree of trust exists" (p. 3). Gehrke (1988) claims that mentoring research conducted in traditional scientific ways "will be generally disappointing" (p. 190). She insists that only qualitative research methods are appropriate when looking at mentoring.

Telementoring. Telementoring, or mentoring via the Internet, is a recent alternative to more traditional forms of mentoring. Most scholars assert that telementoring is effective (Hawisher & Selfe, 1991; Yagelski & Powley, 1996; Dale, 1997; Mather, 1997; Kerka 1998). Many studies on this topic have focused on either the problems in setting up a telementoring exchange (Harris, O'Brien & Rotenberg, 1996; O'Neil & Gomez, 1996; Yagelski & Powley, 1996; Bennett, 1997) or the effects of telementoring on participants (Morley, 1999; Brehm, 1999). However, relatively few studies have looked at the structure and function of telementoring itself. Harris and Jones (1999), in conjunction with the Electronic Emissary Project (HtmlResAnchor www.tapr,org/emissary), have provided insight into message functions within telementoring. Yet, more research is needed to provide an adequate definition of telementoring and a description of the functions of telementors themselves.

Purpose of the Study

In a literature review, based on a synthesis of numerous cognitive and social studies, Jacobi (1991) lists the basic components of mentoring and mentor functions. Jacobi intends these functions to "stimulate thinking about the range of behaviors that characterize mentor-protégé relations, and . . . raise questions about the relative frequency and effectiveness of these behaviors" (p. 510). Because the purpose of this study was to examine the definition and functions of telementoring, Jacobi's functions, although drawn from all fields, provided an interesting starting point for us.

However, as some of the functions Jacobi attributes to mentors in areas such as business or psychology did not apply to our study, we revised Jacobi's list to look like this:

Table 2. Jacobi's Functions of Mentors: Modified List

- Acceptance/support/encouragement
- Advice/guidance
- Clarify values/clarify goals
- Information
- Role Model
- Stimulate acquisition of knowledge
- Training/instruction

Using this revised list of mentor functions, we explored two questions with our study: (a) Do telementors function in the same manner as traditional mentors when mentoring a protégé? and (b) if there are differences, how do these differences help to re-define mentoring?

As noted previously, there is a need for more qualitative studies of mentoring. Traditionally, mentoring has been studied from a more scientific angle, using surveys, word counts, psychological observation, and questionnaires to obtain data. Qualitative research attempts to provide a more holistic look at mentoring interactions. And as Gehrke notes: "No questionnaires or self-distancing instruments will do when one is trying to apprehend how people enter into and maintain distance-reducing relationships such as that of the mentor and the protégé" (p. 194). Based on such arguments, we felt a qualitative study would provide a broader, more comprehensive look at this study.

Design of the Study

Participants

The participants in this study included 24 preservice English education students attending a large university in the mountain west, enrolled in a course entitled "Teaching Reading." They were each assigned to a seventh grade student at a rural middle school for the purpose of acting as telementors or "email buddies" in reading and writing related activities. The preservice students, 1 male and 23 females, were all Caucasians between the ages of 21 and 26. The seventh grade students, 16 males and 13 females, were all Caucasians between the ages of 12 and 13. The study explored two questions: (1) Do telementors function in the same manner as traditional mentors when mentoring a protégé? (2) If there are differences, how do these differences help to re-define mentoring?

Procedures

Twenty-four preservice teachers enrolled in the Teaching Reading course volunteered to participate in this study and were assigned a seventh grade student to mentor in reading and writing skills. Because 23 of the 24 preservice teachers were female, a same gender pairing was not possible. To combat gender differences, we asked each preservice teacher to fill out a questionnaire that we used to match the 29 seventh grade students according to interests and personality. Five preservice teachers each mentored 2 seventh graders.

The preservice teachers did not read or discuss any literature on mentoring in conjunction with this project. We felt that mentors who had not been influenced by other definitions of mentoring would respond in a more unbiased manner to interview questions. All participants referred to their correspondant(s) as their "email buddy." The email interaction occurred on a weekly basis. The preservice teachers sent email outside of class time, while the seventh grade students composed their email during the weekly class period in the computer classroom, preventing any unmonitored interaction. Though approval for this study was received from the university and the school district, there were several stipulations: (1) Reading students were required to sign a form agreeing not to engage in inappropriate activities with their mentee, including the discussion of highly personal, political, or religious issues; (2) Each seventh grade student, as well as their legal guardian, had to sign a form agreeing to be a research subject; and (3) To preserve confidentiality, the school district did not allow us to study the seventh grade students' reactions to the project; we could only study their email responses as they pertained to the preservice teachers. The preservice teachers sent us an electronic carbon-copy of all email they sent to their proteges, including the seventh graders responses, allowing us to monitor the exchange. To preserve anonymity and confidentiality, students knew each other on a first-name basis only. No phone numbers or addresses were exchanged, and all email contact ceased at the end of the semester.

Data Collection and Analysis

In structuring this ethnography, we adopted Bogdan and Bilken's (1992) Modified Analytic Induction method. In conjunction with their ethnographic model, we relied on McMillan and Schumacher's (1989) assertion that research problems within ethnographies can come from many potential sources, one of which is prior research (p. 388). Following Bogdan and Bilken's model, we decided to look at how the functions of telementors compare to those that Jacobi (1991) lists for traditional mentors. This led to our establishing the telementoring interaction between preservice teachers and seventh grade students.

Following the Modified Analytic Induction method (Bogdan & Bilken 1992), we then collected our data. We triangulated our data collection by asking the preservice teachers to complete journal entries. These journal entries were anonymous because we wanted to encourage honest feedback. We also collected all email correspondence in order to examine the actual artifacts of the mentoring experience. Because the mentoring exchange occurred over email, it was impossible for us to be with preservice teachers when they sent and received each email. To compensate for this, we focused on five randomly selected preservice teachers. We tape recorded interviews with these students twice during the semester, assessing their perceptions of mentoring and its purpose. When structuring these interviews, we modified questions used by Duin et. al. (1994) in their ethnography of mentor strategies via telecommunications. We used the same questions in each interview. (See Appendix)

Lastly, after collecting these three artifacts for triangulation—journal entries, email correspondence, and interviews—we compared this data to Jacobi's model. We noticed that Jacobi had based her mentor functions on other scholars' definitions of mentoring, not on actual first-hand data. Therefore, her functions do not describe actual words or phrases of mentors, but rather an interpretation of their actions and attitudes. Many of Jacobi's mentor functions are more explicit within mentoring while others remain implicit. By explicit, we mean that some functions appeared readily within the emails themselves, while other functions were implied within the text. Consequently, we have regrouped Jacobi's functions according to this explicit versus implicit model as follows:

Table 3. Explicit and Implicit Functions of Mentors

EXPLICIT MENTORING FUNCTIONS	IMPLICIT MENTORING FUNCTIONS
Acceptance/support/encouragement	Clarify values/clarify goals
Advice/guidance	Role Model
Information	Stimulate acquisition of knowledge
Training/instruction	

Results

Explicit Functions of Mentoring describes those functions of mentoring that are distinct within the email exchange, the preservice teachers' comments, and journal entries. They are remarks and comments that are easily recognized as mentor functions. These functions supplied most of the feedback as mentors tried to help their protégés. Within the study, we found ample evidence of these functions, supporting the idea that telementors do use the same functions as traditional mentors.

Implicit Functions of Mentoring describes functions of mentoring implied within the email exchange specifically. These functions were not immediately obvious within the actual text of the email exchange. Yet, the preservice teachers indicated, through comments in journal entries and interviews, that these functions were present. In many ways, implicit functions of mentors overlap. For example, a mentor, by helping a protégé clarify her values, models socially accepted behaviors such as concern for others and establishing personal values. As with the explicit functions of mentors, we found abundant evidence of these implicit functions. Once again, this supports the theory that telementors function in the same manner as traditional mentors.

After categorizing the preservice teachers' functions as mentors, we noticed that a large portion of the mentoring exchange remained uncategorized according to Jacobi's model. When mentoring, the preservice teachers spent nearly 50 percent of their time engaging in seemingly non-mentoring activities. They talked about past family trips or who would win the NCAA tournament or a recent snowboarding accident. We categorized this as small talk. At first glance, this small talk may seem relatively unimportant. However, Deborah Tannen (1986) asserts that this is not so. She states that "talking is the major way we establish, maintain, monitor, and adjust our relationships" (p. 30).

Within this small talk, two other mentoring functions appeared, one explicit and one implicit, that were unaccounted for by Jacobi's model. Both of these functions seem unique to telementoring and the medium of electronic communication. We have called these functions "Fostering a Trusting Environment" and "Developing a Reciprocal Relationship." These functions fit into a revised version of Jacobi's model as follows:

Table 4. Explicit and Implicit Functions of Telementors

EXPLICIT MENTORING FUNCTIONS	IMPLICIT MENTORING FUNCTIONS
Acceptance/support/encouragement	Clarify values/clarify goals
Advice/guidance	Role Model
Information	Stimulate acquisition of knowledge
Training/instruction	Developing a Reciprocal Relationship
Fostering Trusting Environment	

Telementor Function 1: Fostering a Trusting Environment

This function examines how telementors create an environment conducive to mentoring, by disclosing personal information to help their buddies get to know them better. "Fostering a Trusting Environment" has been overlooked in more traditional spheres. Basically, the environment in which the traditional mentor finds herself with her protégé, whether it be an office or a classroom etc., will usually establish trust in their relationship. A traditional mentor can use visual cues, nuance of voice, comportment, and general personal contact to enhance trust within his or her mentoring environment. The physical parameters of the mentoring environment can actually determine the outcome. However, telementoring removes this physical environment. Through the medium of words on a computer screen, the telementor must create this level of trust.

The preservice teachers felt a need to turn their relationship with their email buddies into something personal before helping them with their reading and writing. Many of the telementors noticed the difficulty of creating this trust and desired a face-to-face interaction where establishing a mentoring environment would be easier. As one preservice teacher commented in an interview: "I wish I knew the student more personally, that we could meet face-to-face."

The ways that the preservice teachers tried to create this trusting environment were varied. Usually the preservice teachers' responses fell into one of three subcategories: disclosing personal information, relating to the protege, and use of non-visual cues.

Disclosing Personal Information. A rather basic way to engender trust in any relationship, especially a mentoring situation, is to disclose personal information. The preservice teachers did this on a regular basis, trying to create trust between themselves and their protege. For example, many preservice teachers felt it necessary to give details about their families and personal likes and dislikes, writing comments like, "I love to play basketball and volleyball, to dance, read, watch good movies," and "I have four brothers, all snowboarders. So I agree that snowboarding is dope!" Long personal narratives relating past experiences were used by preservice teachers to help engender this trust. For example, one preservice teacher began an email by relating, at some length, her experiences with a pet fish and related side stories about her family. The disclosure of personal information was important to the preservice teachers. They needed to make their relationship personal before they could feel comfortable giving feedback.

Relating to the Protégé. The most wide-spread technique the preservice teachers used was "Relating to the Protege." This category involved the telementors making a connection between their lives and those of their protégés. This meant telling stories and asking questions about the protégés' experiences that were similar to their own. Some representative comments from the preservice teachers include: "I'm glad to hear you're a Zelda fan. So, did you cheat and get one of the books with all the tips or did you do it all on your own? We used the book because it takes us forever! (my brothers and I), " and "I think that is a great idea to write about a memory you don't want to forget. . . . You wrote that you ran outside and hugged your mom—that makes it feel more personal. It made me smile to read that." By specifically relating it to the protégé, the telementors helped protégés feel accepted and trusted.

Non-verbal Cues. This subcategory highlights an interesting aspect of mentoring. Traditional mentors can use non-verbal cues to convey emotion, whereas telementors find this much more difficult. Tannen (1986) comments on the necessity of non-verbal cues, stating that how we speak words "communicates what we think we're doing when we speak: teasing, flirting, explaining, or chastising . . . In other words, how we say what we say communicates social meanings" (p. 30). Bowers and Flinders (1990) concur with Tannen stating, "The body as a 'vehicle of communication' . . . is part of the social system that is reenacted and thus sustained through communication" (p. 68). Telementoring obviously removes this possibility. However, the preservice teachers still felt a need to provide written equivalents of the non-verbal cues Bowers and Flinders describe, thereby compensating for the lack of a physical environment.

This category shows the versatility of written text to convey a writer's personality and non-verbal cues. For example, one preservice teacher, Maric, portrayed her outgoing mannerisms and bubbly personality by alternating lower case and upper case letters in phrases such as "HaPpY SpRiNg!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" This use was particularly noticeable in the way she signed her name, changing it from email to email. For example:

mArIc Maric :^) MaRiC**
MARIC:^) MaRiC:^)

This use of visual layout helped Marie communicate her personality to her protégé, giving the beginnings of a potentially trusting relationship.

Rebecca, as well, used the actual visual text to portray her personality. She also used the text to indicate speech patterns and body language. For example:

> How is school for you? I am in the wind down. Finals are next week and the stress level is high with all the projects due. . . . but I can handle it. . . . When are you through with school? I'd imagine in June? Right? Don't you love this sun when we have it? They are predicting snow again: (Sigh) I am sick of snow. I am ready for the nice weather!!! What about you? [ellipses in original]

The ellipses, the frowning face, and the sigh all recreate body movement and non-verbal speech patterns that are meant to help the protege trust her mentor.

Telementor Function 2: Developing a Reciprocal Relationship

The mentor / protégé relationship is emotionally reciprocal. In order for the relationship to function, both parties need to display genuine concern. Both invest time and energy in one another. This is not a co-dependent relationship, but rather one where each party recognizes the unique humanness of the other.

All the preservice teachers referred to their protégé as their "buddy." The term "buddy" itself connotes a non-hierarchical relationship, facilitating the development of a reciprocal tie. This function illustrates the dialogic nature of mentoring; true mentoring is not hierarchical. Interestingly, although Jacobi states in her basic components of mentoring that such relationships benefit the mentor as well as the protégé, her functions do not reflect that benefit.

The preservice teachers commented extensively on this category, discussing how their protégé was a friend. For example, one student noted: "My most memorable interaction was when my buddy wrote to me and told me how she had broken her foot. It was like I was actually one of her friends and I appreciated her telling me about her life, as well as her friends, books, etc." Another student commented, "I've enjoyed most just our friendly relationship, like we've been friends for years." The telementors felt connected to their protégés.

Unlike all the other mentor functions, the preservice teachers' comments regarding this category changed over the course of the semester. Many of the preservice teachers began the semester wanting their protégés to excel in their reading and writing assignments. However, by the end of the semester, something had changed. Instead of talking about how much they wanted to help their protégés, the preservice teachers made comments about their relationship with their protégé. They saw their protege as a real person, not just a service project. For example, one stated: "It [the telementoring project] gave me the chance to see that these kids are real people who want to do well but sometimes don't know how." Another student when asked in her last journal entry "What one thing this semester has impacted you the most?," responded, "The reality of student's lives."

Discussion

Overall, this study helped us realize the real power behind mentoring. However, we also better understand the problems and difficulties that plague mentoring as an avenue of research. After assessing our data, we reexamined definitions of mentoring, looking at how this study affects them.

As earlier discussed, many definitions look at mentoring in terms of measured outcomes and facilities provided. Jacobi's discussion of the functions of mentors focused on actions and the physical environment; she focused on what mentoring looks like on the outside. However, telementoring suggests a different approach to defining mentoring. As previously noted, some studies of mentoring take more of a social approach to defining mentoring. We should look closely at Gehrke's (1988) claim that "objectivity and precision are not quite appropriate to this matter of the heart" (p. 190). Telementoring, by removing the physical environment and all its distracting operations, places mentoring into a more emotional realm. Instead of defining mentoring as a set of actions on the part of the mentor, or re-actions on the part of the protégé, why not define mentoring as a set of emotions that the mentor and the protégé feel?

Researchers, specifically Gehrke, have commented on this emotional aspect of mentoring. However, some characterize this emotional attachment as points on a continuum of intimacy, with mentoring being the most intimate of helping relationships (Jacobi, p. 511. See also Jacobi's sources, DeCoster & Brown, 1982; Hunt & Michael, 1983; Kram, 1985). Others, such as Phillips-Jones (1982) and Zey (1982), characterize the emotional attachment within a mentoring relationship by the functions the mentor provides, rather than the level of intimacy.

The two functions that we added to Jacobi's list, "Fostering a Trusting Environment" and "Displaying Emotional Attachment," reflect this emotional base, giving mentoring its defining characteristics. Without emotional attachment, mentoring is merely tutoring.

Within this study, we noticed that some mentors were more focused on creating a trusting environment and displaying emotional attachment. Telementoring makes the differences between tutoring and mentoring even more apparent. We would even suggest that the difference between teletutoring and telementoring is the degree to which the functions of "Fostering a Trusting Environment" and "Displaying Emotional Attachment" are represented in the exchange. Based on this distinction, several interactions within our study never reached the mentoring stage.

A potential mentoring relationship must develop into a friendship before it can leave the realm of tutoring. This implies that the power structure within mentoring must change. When defined as a set of emotional connections, mentoring implies that, though the mentor has more experience than the protégé, she does not have more power. The term friendship itself connotes that both parties are actively giving and investing in the relationship. Both have power.

Limitations and Avenues of Further Research

Electronic literacy can be the great leveler for the human race. Stereotyping that is based on physical appearance and personal mannerisms becomes nearly impossible in telementoring. This study did not address the way in which cultural and physical differences affect, or do not affect, telementoring interactions.

As we noted earlier, mentoring requires a certain amount of emotional attachment in order to move past tutoring. Within this study, we noticed preservice teachers who did not move past the tutoring phase. This implies that our study was already very close to tutoring. A more explicit telementoring interaction may result in different functions, or at least a further modification of the functions presented here.

Also, this study did not address the gender implications of telementoring. There was only one male student in the Teaching Reading course, and in the course of our study we noticed he used different mentoring functions than his female classmates. Was this discrepancy related to gender differences or differences in personality? Further research could illuminate this issue.

Conclusion

We are living in the Information Age. New forms of electronic communication will continue to flourish and more will be developed. These new mediums will use, adapt, and modify traditional forms of comunication. However, as this telementoring project demonstrates, old forms to not automatically convert to a new medium. More research needs to be conducted to teach educators how to responsibly use these new technologies. We need to understand how new technological environments affect our ability to interact with one another.

Telementoring allows us to strip away the physical environment in which traditional mentoring occurs and illuminates certain aspects of mentoring in ways that become immediately apparent. Adopting a more social or emotional definition of mentoring will change the way scholars view traditional mentoring. It may even change the way mentoring interactions are established. Further research using telementoring in various contexts will help us better understand the emotional aspects inherent in mentoring.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

Note: Most questions taken from Duin, Ann Hill. et.al. "Responding to Ninth-Grade Students via Telecommunications: College Mentor Strategies and Development Over Time."

1. What do you like most about mentoring?
2. What do you find hardest about mentoring?
3. What are you learning about middle school students' writing?
4. What are you learning about mentoring students?
5. What are you learning about teaching?
6. What types of responses do you think are specifically helpful when mentoring?*
7. How do you think this experience will help you as a secondary education teacher?
8. What do you see is the purpose of mentoring?*
9. What strategies do you use when formulating a response?*

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*These questions are our modifications or additions.

LITERACY ONLINE: LEARNING ABOUT AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENTS VIA THE WEB

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Abstract

Researchers contend that computer based activities are critical to successful classroom cultures. This article describes a distance learning course for graduate students in reading education developed using the World Wide Web Court Tool (WebCt). The course focused on authentic assessment. The infusion of technology offered unique opportunities for the participants to collaborate with peers despite geographical distances. The teachers developed electronic and paper portfolios that were displayed on a webpage to be shared with other teachers. Due to the sense of community that developed during the online course, the teachers and instructor decided to continue to meet online and face-to-face to expand their knowledge about combining portfolios and technology.

Introduction

Distance learning has been a method of delivering instructional courses for many years. Historically, distance learning involved correspondence between learner and teacher through printed material and the postal system. Education obtained at a distance was viewed as less effective than education received on a college or university campus (Spooner, F., Jordan, Algozzine, & Spooner, M.,1999). However, the phenomenal rate of emerging technologies is changing the way some view distance education. Current technological innovations have increased the number of ways distance learning can be delivered in higher education. The potential for teaching university courses from a distance is now immense.

Research on the effectiveness of distance learning varies. Some studies comparing cognitive factors such as amount of learning, academic performance, and grades have reflected no differences between students in distance courses and students in traditional on-campus courses (Spooner, et al., 1999). Studies that have measured students' satisfaction with distance courses offer mixed results. For example, Pirrong and Lathen (1990) found that opportunities for interaction between students and instructors were negatively affected in distance courses. In contrast, Jaeger (1995) found that collaboration and interdependence among students were positively affected by distance education. Other studies have found that comfort and convenience are often positive elements of distance learning and that more experience in distance education technology allows teachers and students to become more comfortable with that mode of interaction (Holbein & Jackson, 1999; Jones, 1992).

Whether off-campus or on-campus, technology has become an integral part of course delivery in higher education. Labbo, Reinking, and McKenna (1998) refer to the use of technology in coursework as "digital literacy." They contend that in the future, "computer-based activities will become critical components of classroom learning cultures, . . . and that the traditional notions of reading and writing will inevitably expand to include electronic or digital literacy" (p. 275).

Students' opportunities for developing digital literacy are linked to their teachers' goals and instructional beliefs (Reinking, Labbo & McKenna, 1997). The teacher's roles in a classroom in which digital literacy skills are learned include those of facilitator, guide, co-participant, and evaluator. Instructional innovations in the use of hypertext, accessing information on the Internet, and computer-mediated communication are found in such classrooms.

Labbo and Reinking (1999) described five goals for integrating technology and literacy instruction. These goals include making new technologies available for literacy instruction, using technology to enhance and transform the goals of traditional literacy instruction, and using new technologies to prepare and empower students for the literacy of the future. New technologies are becoming integral to daily literate activity and as such should be blended with accustomed frameworks of literacy instruction.

Leu and Kinzer (2000) describe a convergence of literacy instruction with Internet sources and other technologies involving information and communication. They suggest that key changes in literacy and literacy instruction will take place in the global economy, and they predict a blending of literacy instruction with the use of networked information and communication technologies in classrooms around the world. The implications of this change are great for classroom practices, professional development programs, and instructional resources used in teacher education programs. Teacher educators can be instrumental in acting as agents of change for the implementation of these new forms of literacy instruction.

Literacy Portfolios and Technology

According to Vacca and Vacca (1996), portfolios have become recognized as a means of assessment and include the use of alternative, global practices to gather information about students and to measure their growth. Incorporating new technologies with portfolio assessment has resulted in the development of electronic portfolios in some classrooms.

Electronic portfolios have been used to encourage students to take more responsibility for their own learning (Wall & Peletier, 1996). These authors found that when peer reviews were moved from a paper to electronic format, students became more aware of the concept of audience and created their own community of learners. In addition, by "going public" with electronic portfolios, students extended their own sense of community beyond the classroom and reassessed the traditional ownership of student writing.

Literacy portfolio and technology research also suggests that technology can motivate teachers and students to collaborate (Au, 1997; Reinking, McKenna, Laboo & Kieffer, 1998; Robyler & Edwards, 2000; Valencia, 1998). These collaborative experiences can impact assessment and instruction in positive ways. The infusion of technology into teachers' professional development offers unique opportunities for teachers to collaborate with other teachers on projects of interest to them, despite regional distance.

As college professors, we have had the pleasure of working with many kindergarten through twelfth grade teachers as graduate students. A common frustration expressed by teachers in our region is the practice of relying solely on standardized test results to measure students' literacy knowledge. Our interest in portfolios as a possibility for more detailed and authentic assessment coupled with students' frustration with high-stakes standardized testing motivated us to design a new course entitled, Authentic Assessment and Strategies.

In order to reach a wide audience of interested teachers from diverse settings, we decided to offer this course online via World Wide Web Court Tool (WebCT). Based on a social constructivist framework, our goal for the graduate students was to work with and learn from experts and one another in collaborative ways to develop electronic and paper literacy portfolios that teachers could use with the students in their own classrooms. The purpose of this paper is to describe the development and implementation of this course.

WebCT

WebCT is a technological tool that facilitates the creation of educational environments on the World Wide Web. WebCT provides one main homepage with a set of interactive tools that can be used to design a course. Tools include administrative access and student access. Only the course designer can access the administrative function of the WebCT course. This allows the course designer to set up confidential student management, tracking and evaluation systems in addition to posting assignments. Students access the WebCT course by logging into the homepage. They then can read and follow the directions posted by the course designer. Educational tools for students include a calendar of scheduled assignments, access to articles and papers, bulletin boards and chat rooms for large and small group interaction, electronic mail (e mail) to fellow students or private email to the instructor, links to related web sites, and student presentation and evaluation pages. [For additional information about WebCt use the following URL: http://about.webct.com.]

The Online Course

Eighteen graduate students from many different counties in the southeastern United States enrolled in the course. All were public school teachers working in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade. Teachers enrolled in this course had varying levels of classroom experience ranging from a minimum of two years to over ten years. These teachers had little experience using portfolio assessment. The course was taught by one of the authors of this paper who consulted with the additional authors.

Since it was the instructor's first excursion into the world of WebCT, the teachers were able to telephone the instructor during online classes if they were experiencing technological problems or to talk about additional philosophical or practical concerns. The class also met three times face-to-face throughout the semester. During these meetings the class developed a webpage with information to help kindergarten through twelfth grade teachers use authentic assessments in their classrooms.

Course Goals

Initial course goals included the following: 1) to activate the teachers' thinking about how literacy portfolios can be used in critical and productive ways; 2) to develop and plan portfolios while increasing the teachers' value of possible technology applications to support their assessment, teaching and learning; and 3) to discuss and choose options for managing technological and paper versions of portfolios for classrooms and professional usage.

One of the teachers' first assignments was to read a journal article which addressed the question, "Who am I as a reader and writer?" While discussing this article online we decided to refine the course goals and pursue the following questions as the purpose for our collaborative endeavor to develop literacy portfolios: 1) Why portfolios? 2) What portfolio models would be valued by educators, parents, and students? 3)How do we develop effective portfolios? and 4) How can portfolios improve content instruction and develop strategic learners who feel ownership of their learning? Over the next weeks, the class pursued these questions and developed portfolio models that could be in their own and other teachers' classrooms.

Soon after the course began, it was realized that learning technology and content at the same time would require not only dedication to the purpose of developing literacy portfolios but also determination to persevere through the many technological challenges. A sense of humor was an essential characteristic for coping. As we climbed together through the pedagogical and technological experiences we came to define ourselves as the "Zoo Crew." We even resorted to digital pictures of the crew posing among palm trees which were posted on our web-page. A sense of community had developed! We became passionate about developing effective literacy portfolios and about expanding administrators' and parents' knowledge concerning the value of portfolios as records of student progress beyond standardized tests.

Developing Understanding

Since the graduate students had limited knowledge about portfolios, we developed background knowledge by sharing readings and reading our text, *Literacy Portfolios in Action* (Valencia, 1998). The on-line conversations concerning the readings led to reflections such as "Our group is not sure where to start. What should be in our table of contents? We are stressing over what to do . . . we have so much information!" Choosing a focus became an essential part of the process.

After conversations about linking content, skills and strategies at different grade levels, the teachers decided to focus on aligning the portfolio goals with the state and national standards. In a related article, the author of the course text, Valencia (1991) states that it is essential to link content and "the ability to use skills and strategies to learn important content" (p. 590). Pressley, Woloshyn, Lysynchuk, Martin, Wood and Willoughby (1990) offered a definition for strategy, "A strategy is composed of cognitive operations over and above the processes directly entailed in carrying out a task" (p. 3). According to Pressley, initial strategy use is conscious and deliberate; however, with practice strategies can be employed automatically. After reading and discussing Valencia and Pressley, the teachers decided the components of the portfolios should be more than "kids work stuffed in folders." The teachers wanted the material in the portfolio to reflect essential links between standards, content, skills, and strategies which students could use to think critically about their own learning.

One teacher stated that portfolios could serve as "teachers' proof and parents' pride and joy" of each child's learning. This comment reflects how the teacher provided evidence of students' progress. The teachers believed that parents should be involved through family portfolios, conferencing, and primarily learn to develop pride in their child as they share goals for literacy progress. In answer to their initial question, "Why portfolios?" the teachers determined that portfolios should provide evidence beyond standardized tests to show each student's unique and continuous progress in literacy learning.

Students then read work by Hoffman (1995) that presents numerous definitions of portfolios. Examples ranged from a "moving van portfolio" with random collections of samples of literacy activities to goal-based and reflective portfolios which are more systematic representations of student work (p. 594). The teachers preferred the more goal-based and reflective portfolios. They also read Valencia's (1998) description of five different types of portfolios: "showcase" (highlights the best/most meaningful work for students), "documentation portfolios" (document performance and achievement and lead instruction), "evaluation portfolios" (evaluate achievement and report to others), "processes portfolios" (document process of creating products, inform instruction and document growth), and "composite portfolios" (document growth, evaluate performance/achievement). The teachers discussed these variations on-line and decided, overall, that they preferred the composite portfolio model. They believed that literacy portfolios that were goal-based, reflective, documented growth, evaluated performance aligned with standards, evaluated strategy automaticity, and provided student ownership would be valued by educators, parents, and students.

After the group's decision about a portfolio model, a teacher named Rita wrote to her kindergarten/first-grade teacher colleagues in the course, "This is awesome! I like this online stuff! Let's start deciding which goals we want to address. Some of them having to do with print can easily be clumped together. We can word them a little more general than the state standards." Heather said, "I feel so much better." With a clear focus on a preferred model, teachers were eager to get started with the design for their literacy portfolios.

Talking with Experts

After students had completed some of the reading and begun to develop plans, several guest speakers joined us online to discuss our ideas and models for developing portfolios. First, the Dean of our College of Education, Angela Lumpkin, spoke to us in our chat room about professional portfolios and how they can guide our student portfolios. The class groups were able to access her Microsoft Power Point presentation about portfolios on WebCT prior to the conversation. In addition, before the chat students read *Literacy* *for all students: Ten steps toward making a difference* (Au,1997), which stressed the importance of reflecting upon your own philosophy of literacy, instruction, and learning. After the chat with the dean and further email reflections, a class member named Amy said to the class on e-mail, "How did you like the chat with the dean? I thought she had some good ideas for portfolios. I printed out a copy of her notes and think they will be very helpful." The class on-line discussion centered on the structure of a teacher's professional portfolio and how it could be used to guide instruction.

Another valued guest speaker online was the author of our text, Sheila Valencia. Valencia shared why she wrote her text. One student, Rita, told Valencia that she enjoyed the book because it was ". . . very believable [and] realistic in what was expected of the students and parents." Valencia replied by noting that "The teachers made it real. They actually did it!" This conversation helped confirm the class' belief that portfolios should indicate students' progress and assist teachers in connecting assessment and instruction to the standards and needs of individual students.

Later in the conversation, the teachers shared their feelings about the difficulty in determining what kinds of portfolios they wanted to create for their grade levels while convincing parents and administrators about the need for authentic assessment. One teacher stated: "I feel like my student portfolios in the past have been mostly a showcase format, but I plan to try to make them more composite next year. It is very hard to convince the other teachers how useful they really are!" Valencia replied by noting that "Some of our teachers actually brought kids and portfolios to a school board meeting to convince them of the value. It worked to some degree." She went on to tell the class that the "key is to align portfolios and report cards with widely accepted content standards" and that she would "share portfolios during back to school night and send them home." Children also would "conduct interviews with their parents."

One student, Allyson, commented "I think that when you are doing something meaningful, others will catch on. Your success, and especially that of your students, speaks for itself and spreads!" Valencia replied by saying, "Yes, some of those schools that began with individual teachers now have portfolios in the whole school. We even have some parents requesting portfolio teachers for their kids!" Tracey added, "That is very powerful! It was inspiring to listen to the teachers share their excitement about becoming portfolio teachers!" The discussion then moved to electronic portfolios. Class members and Valencia agreed that portfolios, or elements of portfolios on disks can "travel" more easily to parents, as long as they have access to the technology.

After the on-line discussion, the teachers were sure that the Valencia text was "a keeper" and said they felt prepared to develop their portfolio models. They also shared how they believed the chat room was beneficial for learning and collaboration when using WebCt. They decided that without the chats the course would be more impersonal, and seemed very pleased that the author of the text and the Dean took time to share their thoughts about assessment.

The teachers stated in later emails that the online conversations with the speakers were intense and lively. The guest speakers' commitment to portfolios also stimulated conversations and helped them develop a new framework for thinking about assessment.

How Do We Develop Portfolios?

After discussing readings and meeting with guest speakers online, the class was prepared to begin developing literacy portfolios. The groups of teachers created rubrics to indicate state objectives and tools for assessment

Figure 1. Suggested Table of Contents

1. Personal Information
    a. Interest Inventories
    b. Teacher/Student Conference Form
    c. Teacher/Parent Conference Form
    d. Autobiography
    e. Goals/Strategies
2. Standardized and Informal Evaluation
    a. Iowa Test of Basic Skills
    b. Running Records
    c. Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills- Revised (CIBS-R) grades pre-kindergarten-9
    d. STAR Diagnostic Report
3. Work Samples
    a. Fiction
    b. Folklore
    c. Poetry
    d. Nonfiction
    e. Persuasive Writing
    f. Work in Progress
    g. Other Work
4. Assessments
    a. teacher self-assessment and evaluations
    b. student self-assessment and evaluations
    c. parental involvement

based on standards and instructional goals for their grade levels. To view the contents of the class' portfolio, please visit the website at http://www.westga.edu/~eroberts.

Once standards and assessments were determined, the class developed a suggested Table of Contents to indicate potential contents of the portfolio (Figure 1). The Table of Contents presented here provides a broader picture of the kinds of items that the teachers believed should be included in the portfolio. It includes both electronic and paper formats. Finally, sample literacy portfolios were displayed on the new webpage to share with other interested educators. We invite all educators to visit the webpage and to offer suggestions and/or comments related to using portfolios in the classroom.

How Can Portfolios Improve Content Instruction and Develop Strategic Learners Who Feel Ownership of Their Portfolios?

Since the teachers agreed with research done by Reinking, McKenna, Labbo, and Kieffer (1998) that states that new technologies are transformational and can increase literacy skills, the teachers decided to include videos, audio-tapes of students' reading progress and strategies, and presentations on disks as a part of the portfolios. Some teachers decided to create individual webpages for students to use as a part of their portfolio to indicate how and when they select and use strategies for literacy learning.

The teachers determined that both students and teachers should select work that was representative of student progress. Student selections would allow students to feel ownership of the learning and would focus their attention on critical analysis of their own work. Students had to think about and be able to articulate why a piece of work should be included in the portfolio because the teachers believed that self-selection of contents encourages students to reflect on their growth as learners.

In addition, the teachers decided to keep part of the portfolio as "hands-on," as Valencia had suggested during our online discussion. "Hands-on" items included artifacts that would not be effectively portrayed in videos or pictures, some authentic assessments, and input from parents.

Discussion

Using technology to help diverse teachers in geographically distant locations learn about portfolio assessment was a learning experience for all people involved. Our desire to move beyond standardized testing to develop more detailed and authentic forms of assessment to communicate student learning brought us together. One teacher summarized the group feeling about the need for portfolios when she said, "Portfolios show all the little steps in between continuous assessment and instruction."

The students evaluated the course by journaling. They also completed mid-point reflections, final reflections, a WebCT survey, and evaluation forms provided by the university. Their reflections and evaluations concerning the WebCt portion of the course were positive. The majority of the teachers mentioned that they liked having the digital pictures of the class members on the WebCt, particularly during their group interactions. They commented that the pictures "personalized' conversations. The majority also enjoyed the chats online because they often were able to say more than they would in person, especially during group forums and chats. They believed that the chats helped them reframe and expand their focus about portfolio assessment. The teachers also liked reading the content information and searching the Internet to meet the individual needs of their classroom situation. They believed they had more flexibility to apply theory to classroom practice.

The frequent use of the Internet during the course also led the teachers to discussions about ways to include authentic assessment ideas in action research projects. Overall, the teachers found they gained technology skills to help them develop a combination of paper and electronic portfolios which included webpages, disks, and paper documentation of students' literacy progress.

One of the reflective questions dealt with "How would you convince a non-believer that portfolio assessment is an important part of assessment?" Reflections included sharing personal and student portfolios with non-believers plus having them "sit in" during conferences with parents and the students. Also, they felt it might be even more beneficial if the owner of the portfolio gave the non-believer a tour through their collection. One teacher commented, "Talk is cheap!" The teachers shared the suggestion that the non-believer should also observe the enthusiasm among students, parents, and teachers associated with portfolios.

Additional reflections of the teachers included the necessity to align the portfolios with the curriculum and progress reports. This alignment would require accommodations with administrators and other teachers to enhance the quality of authentic assessments in school districts. The teachers also emphasized the importance of students understanding the link between assessment and instruction and how the students and parents need to enter a partnership to help them develop ownership and accountability for literacy learning. One teacher suggested that students should grade themselves and write future goals about how they should continue their individual progress at the end of each grading period. One of her fourth grade students wrote, "I need to think about and question myself when I am reading." The students' goals, comments, and grades were then compared to the teacher's progress reports and the resulting conversation notes were included in the portfolios and shared with parents and administrators.

To refine this course WebCT could be used again but would include samples of artifacts from the first group of teachers' classroom and personal portfolios, extensions of the webpage, and meetings with the first group to help the new participants build enthusiasm for authentic assessments as they begin the development of their portfolios. We would also require that a technologically knowledgeable teacher was included in each discussion group.

Technology enabled teachers with similar interests to find each other and collaborate on a project of interest, even though they lived and worked many miles apart. When the course reached fruition, the teachers decided to continue collaborating about effective assessments via WebCt. We learned that portfolios are always a work in progress and additional support might be needed as we use portfolios in the classroom.

We have agreed to meet online regularly and face-to-face twice a year to increase our knowledge about literacy portfolios and to share our experiences of using them with other teachers. As Valencia stated during our online chat, "Portfolio success can be contagious!" It is our hope that it will be.

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PRESERVICE TEACHER'S CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT USING COMPUTER MEDIATED COMMUNICATION IN LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSES

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Abstract

Only recently have we realized the increased need to design teacher education approaches that more effectively help preservice teachers in discussing their developing knowledge bases. This study explored the notion of the types of developing discourse related to the teaching of language arts through the use of computer mediated communication. Forty-nine preservice teachers participated weekly in threaded discussions over the period of one semester in their language arts course. Findings suggested that the preservice teachers engaged in talk that supported different types of pedagogical discourse related to teaching literacy. The types of discourse reflected: personal stories, talk related to teaching literacy strategies, defining literacy, and influences on their views of teaching literacy. Although students thought the CMC environment was helpful in shaping their views further research needs to be conducted to gain a greater understanding of the instructor's role within the CMC environment.

Only recently have we realized the increased need to design teacher education approaches that more effectively help preservice teachers to develop expertise (Kagan, 1992; Roskos & Walker, 1994). For example, several attempts to develop conceptual knowledge for literacy have focused on having preservice teachers write in journals and discuss in collaborative groups what they are learning about teaching (Gillmore & Tharp, 1992; Risko, Roskos, & Vukelich, 1999). Vygotsky's view that learners must talk through their new understandings during social interactions as conceptual development advances has been cited as a crucial aspect of preservice teachers conceptual development (Roskos & Walker, 1997). As novices discuss new conceptual knowledge, interweaving it with their current understanding, they develop a deeper understanding of the content. However, the large number of preservice teachers present in methods classes mitigates against total involvement during class discussions of all students on a regular basis. The opportunity to involve technology in a course as a means to increase communication seemed a logical solution to nagging concerns we had about the quality of talk in our language arts methods courses. Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) affords preservice teachers the opportunity to use the language of reading and writing instruction in a safe context. This electronic note passing is similar to other forms of written exchanges such as dialogue journals, and draws on the processes of reading, writing and oral language (Anson & Beach, 1995; Jackson, 1992). In electronic communication, preservice teachers get the opportunity to open and read the responses of their classmates and respond again. In this way, a class dialogue can emerge where everyone has a chance to "speak" electronically, with everyone else, in a non-threatening environment.

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) can be used as a tool to mediate concept development while preservice teachers are reading and thinking about literacy concepts in their own study space rather than the university classroom. CMC occurs in one of two formats, either synchronous or asynchronous. The former implies that the writer and the reader act in real-time. The latter allows readers and writers to respond at their leisure thus giving both users additional time to process information without fear of being lost in a conversation that has already scrolled off the screen. The threaded discussion or asynchronous chat provides students with the opportunity to engage in discourse outside of class, share new ideas between class sessions, and post questions. Being able to respond at their convenience provides time for thoughtful responses free of immediate evaluation.

Utilizing CMC with 7th grade learners, Beach (1996) found a reduced sense of intimidation, in addition, students who were reticent to speak in classroom discussion were more likely to participate in CMC environments. The reduced intimidation also led to a sense of camaraderie in which everyone talked allowing for a greater degree of equity. To further support CMC, Fey (1994) reported a case study of an adult learner who had a speech handicap and gained a new sense of confidence when participating in CMC chats. Both studies (Beach, 1996; Fey, 1994) suggest that CMC exchanges can foster an environment where students tend to write more provocative and outrageous positions than they would express in the face-to-face context. Learners also entertained tentative opinions or hypotheses and participants expressed theories that were presumed open to exploration.

In these studies, CMC also afforded learners the opportunity to use personal experience as a way to establish community. The ability to use one's personal knowledge provided an entrée into the language of the community. This, according to Fey (1997), makes talk and learning most relevant for students' newly developing knowledge bases.

Theoretical Framework

According to Halliday (1979), conversations unfold where exchanges tend to be more tentative and exploratory. Further, discourse is a shared experience, which speakers elaborate on and make meaning from; the unfolding mode is the process of explaining something embedded in this shared understanding. As a result of discourse unfolding, the construction of the talk is dialogic, that is, the talk is dependent on the anticipation of responses and responses are contingent on the shared experience. Process is at the center of the learning and learners are able to flesh out ideas with discourse talk that is supported by others.

Electronic conversations share these same constructs. Within a conversation, participants anticipate responses. These responses are contingent on the shared experience that is being built within the electronic medium. The Vygotskian notion of the "tool kit for learning" situates the role of voice as a central tool within the social milieu. The social milieu always exists because one voice is never in isolation from other voices (Wertsch, 1991). Thus, meaning comes into existence only when two or more voices make exchanges. Likewise, electronic communication only exists when two or more participants engage in a dialogue related to a shared experience.

Furthermore, Fox (1993) suggests that discourse is an important tool for preservice teachers because learning to teach is a social process of negotiation. However, much of a preservice teacher's learning is situated in a university community that often constrains the dialogue that is needed to advance emerging conceptual development. Preservice teachers do participate in other communities that contribute to constructing their pedagogical knowledge. Aside from their own experiences as students, beyond the classroom they may read newspaper and magazine articles about phonemic awareness, legislated phonics, dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and so forth. These communities may exist in harmony or, they may clash and cause tension. Thus, preservice teachers are likely to encounter conflicting views as they navigate among various discourses and ideas; CMC can serve as a safe environment to flesh out these conflicting views. Through the CMC environment preservice teachers may begin to see the importance of socially constructed knowledge, thus understanding how meaning is constructed from the intertextual nature of the relationships built by the shared written dialogue (Smagorinsky & O'Donnell-Allen, 1998).

As preservice teachers engage in electronic talk, they may consider alternative ideas, through rethinking and restating their thoughts. This shared text can then become the center of shared inquiry for the class. Several studies have supported the use of CMC as a means to develop conceptual knowledge. For example, Hunt (1994), found in a study of CMC that shared inquiry entailed learning a new genre of academic exchange characterized by a tentative and exploratory stance. Further, it has been found that this type of academic exchange may create a social setting that supports preservice teachers' emerging beliefs and their development of conceptual knowledge (Britzman, 1991). According to Grisham (1997), the intertextual connections drawn from CMC exchanges can support not only teachers' conceptual knowledge, but also their developing theory bases. Grisham found that the discourse within a CMC environment provided students with support and encouragement for exploring and elaborating new ideas.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study, then, was to explore preservice teachers' literacy talk as they discussed language arts content within a CMC environment using a threaded discussion format. The question that guided our exploration was the following: What kinds of talk do preservice teachers in a language arts methods class use when communicating in a CMC environment?

Method

Setting and Participants

The participants were 49 preservice elementary teachers enrolled in one of two sections of the same language arts course at a central southwestern university. They were either at the end of their sophomore year or at the beginning of their junior year in an elementary education program. All participants had volunteered after the purpose of the study had been explained to them in class. Participation in the CMC exchanges was part of their coursework. All 49 participants posted responses once weekly for 10 weeks during a semester. A small number (8) of students posted responses more than once per week. The total number of responses posted was 513. The preservice teachers ranged in age from 20-38 years old. Students participated in the exchanges either in the campus computer lab or off-campus in their own homes.

There was an initial playing period during the first two weeks of the CMC discussions that allowed the preservice teachers to develop a sense of community and establish their presence on-line within the group (Cummins & Sayers, 1997). The instructor made four posts during the ten-week period. These posts reflected either a personal teaching experience encountered and its relationship to a class reading or the sharing of an idea related to literacy teaching pedagogy. The instructor did not pose direct questions; however, the instructor's comments guided the responses made by the students.

Data Sources

Data sources included ten weeks of archived CMC exchanges for both sections, with conversations being archived at the beginning of each week. The CMC exchanges were used as a basis for class discussion and, thus, enhanced the electronic dialogue over time. We used the constant-comparative method of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to refine the instructor's participation in both the CMC dialogue and class discussion. CMC dialogue was used as the primary data source to compare the talk across both sections as well as field notes that were taken throughout the semester. Emerging themes were used as a lens to code the CMC exchanges.

All students were asked to post one response each week for ten weeks. They could post an original idea, post off a peer, or respond to the instructor's initial post. The instructor's posts only appeared in the discussion every other week in contrast to the students who posted each week. Instructor prompts in posting were related to personal teaching experiences or literacy teaching pedagogy. Examples of this were: "After reading the article about literature discussion groups and participating in literature discussion groups in class this week, I wanted to share some situations I encountered when teaching in my fifth grade classroom" and, "Much of the discussion over the past four weeks has been situated on how to best help struggling readers/writers. We have talked about many new methods and models in class and I wanted to explore what was most meaningful to you regarding programs and practices."

Lastly, of the three authors, one was the instructor for both sections of the course. The second two researchers did not teach the course; however, they had taught a similar course previous to this study and had significant input into the course content of these two sections. The first two authors completed the data analysis, reaching a 100% agreement on the themes as they read and reread the data set.

Analysis

The data were analyzed using the constant-comparative method of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Initial themes developed from open coding and were later refined to identify types of discourse in the threaded discussion. The themes within each broad category were developed by looking across both sections of the course for similar kinds and subjects of talk. Summaries were recorded on data display sheets to assist in analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Initial themes emerged from the data and axial coding was used as a way to build a story connecting the relationships among the themes (Strauss

& Corbin, 1990). Axial coding is used to take initial themes developed from data to interconnect the categories (Creswell, 1998). The data were thoroughly saturated from initial coding and amounts of talk related to each theme were analyzed further. Saturating the data, according to Glesne and Peskin (1992), refers to the extent to which the data are analyzed, with regard to this study, the coding categories were explored through the use of software to observe the overlap among themes in order to help build the story.

Results

Findings indicated that these preservice teachers began to use the discourse of language arts within an electronic community. Through the use of shared inquiry and trying on of others' perspectives, the preservice teachers' electronic talk added to their elaboration of course content. There were identifiable patterns across the weeks of data collection that were consistent within the discussion that took place in the class each week.

Five themes of language arts discussion emerged from the data. The types of talk were: (1) talk related to teaching literacy strategies, (2) talk regarding how participants defined literacy, and specifically, what reading was and what writing was, (3) the use of others' views to help the learner define what reading was, (4) personal stories shared to illustrate points regarding literacy instruction, and lastly, (5) talk related to the use of CMC and software as a literacy teaching tool.

Theme #1: Talk Related to Teaching Literacy Strategies

Literacy strategies were defined in the course as the readers' ways of thinking that could be adapted and monitored to help with meaning construction. During the first week the instructor commented through the threaded discussion that she found it interesting how teaching literacy strategies could be used as a focal point of the language arts instruction, as suggested by Farris (1997) in the core textbook for the course. The instructor then went on to describe a successful literacy event related to visual imagery and drawing with children. The discussion was presented as a way to share with the students; however, the posting did not ask the students to directly respond or contain a question prompt.

Responses in the CMC environment resulted in two weeks of discussion across both sections of the course centered on literacy strategy instruction. Some of the posts were specifically related to a reading or writing strategy, but over half of the responses were labeled as literacy instructional strategies. The following two responses are representative and salient in understanding how these preservice teachers were constructing their pedagogical discourse: Susan: "I agree with everything that you guys have written. I too think reading and writing cannot be taught separately." Mandy: "I used extended wait time as a strategy for helping kids help themselves figure out unknown words when I worked with a group of second graders. I was surprised how giving them time to think often lead to them figuring out a word or asking about a part of the word." The talk related to teaching strategies indicated that preservice teachers were using their class discussion and their own experience to make sense of their understanding of literacy strategies.

Theme #2: Students Talk About Defining Literacy

Discussion within the CMC groups often contained talk regarding participants' definitions of literacy or reading. The instructor shared with the group her experiences about how her own definitions of literacy had changed in ten years as a classroom teacher and reading specialist. Students in the discussions reflected on personal definitions of literacy through stories of how a reading teacher should teach: Kerry: "Language arts consists of both reading and writing. They run parallel with each other. I feel that neither of the two is more important than the other. They are both equally important. I think it would be impossible to teach one without teaching the other." John: "I agree that children must learn to read and write together because a child will be able to read what they have written. Reading is about making your own meaning. Sometimes you do it with books or you can write." As the students posted, they began to use the discourse of language arts and create definitions of literacy that reflected their own stance.

Theme #3: Peer Influences on Views About Reading and Writing

Students also shared within the CMC group and explained what they believed about teaching reading and writing processes. CMC group members had an impact on one anothers' developing philosophies and students often flip-flopped their views after reading posts within the group. In other words, peers seemed able to influence not only other participant's pedagogical discourse descriptions of literacy philosophies, but also their entire lens for thinking about best practices related to literacy teaching.

The following excerpts of threads from the CMC discussion illustrates this changing view of philosophy prompted by a peer. Ashley: "My views on the writing process have changed over this semester. R____ made a good point about this in his post in describing reading and I think it changed my mind about reading. He stated to the group that reading is a way to make meaning and I had always thought of it as a subject."

Megan: "I agree with Amber and others. I think my method of teaching reading will differ slightly from year to year as I learn about the kids. It has already changed from this discussion group. I will not be hard core basal or hard core whole language."

Theme #4: My Personal Stories Related to Teaching or Learning About Literacy

Although peers influenced talk within the CMC discussion, personal anecdotes were also shared weekly in many of the discussions. These anecdotes tended to fall into three subcategories: stories from participants' experiences as elementary students, stories about someone they had observed teaching reading, and stories about a recent teaching experience of their own. Personal stories were powerful tools for the students to express their knowledge about what they believed to be best practice. Some students were so adamant about their own school experiences being viewed as best practice that they sought to gather consensus from their peers to support a particular view. These types of posts tended to stand alone without threads from other CMC members contributing to them; however, they still continued to appear frequently in the discussion despite the lack of response they garnered. It was evident that they were important to the authors and they often reflected changing philosophy. The following excerpts of discussion emphasize this: Brianna: "I used to want my 5-year old nephew to write perfectly because he is so smart; but being in this class has made me realize that although he is intellectually bright his literacy processes are still emerging." Kelly: "I remember, as a child, being told what to write and just hated it. I think it is so very important that children have opportunities to free write in their journals on a daily basis." Mandy: "I agree with a lot of the other comments about groups. When I was in school, we rarely got to get into groups because we got too noisy. Although I rarely was ever involved in classroom group activities, I really liked them and will want to use them in my own classroom. I believe that working in groups helps all of the students. Everyone can share their ideas in groups and the talk is much more deep. It helps a student's self-esteem, listening and language skills also." This CMC community relied on personal stories as a way to interpret ideas regarding best practice and define literacy. The stories also suggested literacy strategies participants felt were important to incorporate into their own teaching.

All of the discourse within the semester was guided at first by comments suggested by the instructor; however, early on students formed their own agendas for the discussions. An interesting distinction regarding this shift from relating or talking about the instructor's comments was the lack of discussion regarding readings from the course. There were almost no comments during the semester by students related to the course text or outside journal articles assigned for reading as part of the course. This may suggest that students had difficulty connecting the readings to their own experiences or that there was a mismatch between the selection of readings and the perceived course agenda as understood by the students.

Theme #5: CMC is a Positive Tool for Discussing Literacy

The CMC discussions during the final week were directed by an instructor prompt, which asked the students to reflect on their feelings about the usefulness of CMC in a language arts course. Students posted many similar responses and the emphasis was overwhelmingly in favor of CMC as an instructional tool for the following reasons. Amy: "Using discussion groups did help me gain a greater understanding of the talk used by teachers in the language arts . . . talking in the class about different issues on language arts and then responding, reading, and learning through other people's opinions on the internet [was helpful]. Also, reading others' views helped support and influence my views by knowing others have the same feelings toward several issues . . . reading others' responses helped me sometimes alter a little or maybe rethink some of my ideas through the influence of the discussion groups. This has greatly broadened my perspective on teaching reading." Sam: "I believe this discussion group helped me get a better grasp on the language arts "lingo" used by language arts teachers. There are students in the class that have a very good grasp of the language and it did help me. If a student presented a good argument within a discussion then the discussion had the power to change my mind or opinion about a topic. The nice thing about the discussion group is people have longer time to ponder the posts and can make a more meaningful contribution. I think it also helps those who don't feel comfortable speaking up in class."

The overall responses were in favor of CMC as a learning tool during this course. As suggested by the above posting excerpts, students felt that the influence of peers had made a great impact of their own views. Electronic talk also contributed to preservice teachers' understanding of teaching language arts. This is consistent with the concept of talk as a primary vehicle for learning, as suggested by Vygotsky (1978). The CMC discussions supported emerging conceptual knowledge and provided a forum to try on new perspectives within a safe environment. This fostered the development of understanding about language arts philosophy and best practice.

Discussion

Using computer mediated communication as a tool to help preservice teachers elaborate their understanding of literacy learning, we found that these preservice teachers developed a sense of community within the threaded discussion. They discussed the shared ideas and used one anothers' ideas to try on various perspectives. There was an unfolding mode (Halliday, 1979) as the preservice teachers anticipated responses and sought to provide others with explanations of their ideas (Theme 2 & 3). Even though CMC is a written text, the preservice teachers responses took on characteristics of oral conversations using personal stories and experiences (Theme #4) to elaborate their understanding. This is consistent with the findings of Fey (1997) and Beach (1996) that indicated CMC environments support elaboration of emerging understanding and connectivity. As indicated in the chosen examples, preservice teachers viewed the exchanges as explorations of their thinking, anticipating responses from classmates about their ideas in order to further expand their conceptual development (Theme 3). This can be seen from the many overlapping comments made during the discussion.

We also looked at the language arts themes preservice teachers would generate during a language arts methods course when using threaded discussion. The electronic discussions allowed these preservice teachers to construct their understanding of literacy by responding to others' definitions (Theme # 2), experiences, and stories (Theme #4). As students talked, they built their knowledge base by representing the elaborations in their own discourse. They often talked about what they would do when they were teaching, and they referenced personal experiences (Theme #4) to support their possible actions. Their talk took on the temporary nature of a conversation rather than the authoritative nature of text. This tentativeness gave way to the preservice teachers trying on new ideas and reshaping their thinking (Theme #3). In this study, participants discussed general course ideas, (Theme #1), defined their understanding of literacy (Theme #2), and connected these understandings to personal experiences (Theme #4) and the ideas of their peers (Theme #3).

It is interesting to note that this group of preservice teachers referred only infrequently to the ideas presented in the textbook. We had expected that they would refer equally to the textbook and to their personal understanding, interweaving the two knowledge sources as this was modeled several times by the instructor. However, within the threaded discussion, the preservice teachers spent more time discussing their current understandings based on other students' responses. This lack of discussion related to the readings might reflect the students' pull toward talk as a way to learn in contrast to traditional pedagogies that suggest reading and lectures as primary ways to learn (Kohn, 1999).

From the positive comments toward CMC and the interactive nature of the electronic dialogue (Theme #5), we began to look more closely at the kinds of prompts that the professor used. The professor used invitations and comments based on the ideas that were discussed in class and in the textbook. These preservice teachers responded well to being invited into a conversation rather than simply being asked questions. Additional study needs to be conducted regarding how to engage preservice teachers in authentic electronic talk. Exactly what role the professor plays as well as how to more fully engage students in discussions of class readings remains to be explored.

Limitations

This study was exploratory in nature and limited by the number participants. Likewise, only themes were developed from the data set. Further study needs to explore the interconnections among these themes as well as the developmental nature of the themes to analyze how threaded discussion contributes to preservice teachers' developing conceptualization. Although field notes were taken it was difficult to analyze the influence the threaded discussion might have had on classroom interactions including discussion prompted by the instructor. Further study needs to explore the instructor's talk during class and how that may or may not shape the electronic discussion. Other limitations include the way the discussion was structured as part of a course assignment. If discussions were voluntary in nature, the talk may have increased or decreased. In Kinzer's (1999) recent work, it is suggested that multiple groups might be set up to look at how the electronic talk might influence the course discussion over time and, perhaps, invite guests to participate. Kinzer further recommended that student led versus instructor led CMC might be explored. This study used instructor posts only four times and relied primarily on student-led discussion. Finally, the investigation of whether students perceive that CMC is useful in building their knowledge bases with regard to literacy teaching needs to be further explored.

Implications

What makes this study unique is that the professor used scaffolding in the interactions rather than a recitation format. Believing strongly in electronic talk, the professor read the students' posts without responding directly within the discussion; the intent was to invite discussion among the students. The professor made only four posts during the ten weeks, which gave ample opportunity for students to develop discussion threads among each other. In essence, the electronic talk did create a social context where each individual could read and respond. This electronic note passing resembled social interaction rather than written communication because ideas were viewed as emerging and molded throughout the discussion. This is more characteristic of an oral conversation as described by Halliday (1979) than written text. However, the question remains as to whether electronic talk can ever be considered the equal of face-to-face dialogue in a classroom. Many of the paralinguistic features of true communication cannot be duplicated via the computer screen. Nevertheless, the advantages of CMC already enumerated in this article deserve further exploration. Clearly, much work is yet to be done to explore this mode of instruction as a viable tool for helping preservice teachers construct their pedagogical knowledge. However, at least, these preservice teachers shared and reshaped their thinking as they participated in electronic discussion using the media as a magic slate for their thinking.

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NEW HORIZONS IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND SCHOOL REFORM

RETHINKING THE LANGUAGE ARTS: A FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL WIDE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

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Abstract

Interest in developing schools that promote academic achievement for all students has been and is the focus of much research. In this paper we suggest a framework to be utilized in the development, execution, and evaluation of successful school wide language arts programs. The Framework for School Wide Professional Practice is based on school effects research, and research on best practices in language arts. The framework contains several components that are interrelated, not presented as a list of qualifications. The uniqueness of this framework is the flexibility it provides schools in developing and reviewing language arts programs that are created to meet the specific needs of the community. It also offers the profession a means of communicating about excellence. In conceptualizing this framework, our goal was to develop a tool for educators and administrators to use when creating or reviewing their school language arts programs.

In the past three decades there has been much discussion about reforming schools and their educational programs. In fact, school reform has become a topic of conversation in many different arenas. Interest in developing schools that promote academic achievement of all students has been and is the focus not only in these conversations but also in the research on school reform. However, one difficulty with implementing reform efforts in schools is that proposals usually focus on one aspect of reform and do not integrate multiple reform agendas (i.e., school effects research, teacher change research, curriculum reform, and research on best practices in language arts). What is needed is a way for schools to simultaneously review important characteristics and conditions found in the literature on school reform.

In this paper, we have developed a framework for professional practice that is based on research on language arts programs and school effects. We have defined professional practice as having three primary components: curriculum, school culture, and classroom environment. The focus of our framework is to provide a tool for schools to use when critically reflecting upon their language arts programs. It will assist them in using multiple reform agendas to better understand current practice and potential changes within their own schools. In essence, the framework will assist educators in identifying the conditions and characteristics needed to develop an effective school. In addition, the framework offers the profession a means of communicating about excellence as well as a structure for focusing school improvement efforts. Our goal in developing this framework is to use two lines of inquiry in order to create a tool for educators and administrators to use when developing or reviewing school language arts programs.

School Effects Research

In this section, it is important to note that we summarize the school effects research as opposed to more generalized reform issues such as those found in Berliner and Biddle (1995).

Effective school research, which focused on student achievement, became an important topic in the early 1970's (Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbacker, 1979; Edmonds, 1983; Klitgaard & Hall, 1974; Weber, 1971). At this point in time research studies identified variables that helped to describe effective schools. Purkey and Smith (1983), in an extensive integrative review of school effects research, suggested 13 variables that are general in nature and focus on important process measures of school effectiveness. These variables were often reported as lists of characteristics concerned with the climate and structural features present in effective schools (Good & Brophy, 1986). However, seeing the inter-relatedness of these variables was difficult. Cohen (1983) provided a simplified framework for understanding this rapidly growing body of knowledge by explaining the inter-relatedness of the growing lists of variables. In his work, Cohen (1983) suggested three characteristics useful for organizing the research. First, effective classroom teaching is important to school effectiveness. Second, there must be careful coordination and management of instructional programs at the building level. Third, a sense of shared values and school culture among staff and students is needed.

Effective classroom instruction, which Cohen (1983) identifies as the first characteristic, develops the concept that curriculum and instructional programs are interrelated. The instructional objectives of the school, grade, and classroom are evaluated by pupil performance which means there is curriculum articulation and organization that is purposeful (Purkey & Smith, 1983). Thus, teacher expectations are determined by curricular goals and commitment to high student achievement (Brookover, et al., 1979).

Cohen's (1983) second characteristic of effective schools, careful coordination and management, suggests the interconnectedness of administrative roles and the school's work. Specifically, the active involvement of the school administration in helping the staff develop, implement, and evaluate clear goals and quality instruction are important aspects of their work (Brookover, et al., 1979; Edmonds, 1983; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Weber, 1971). The administrator's vision of the school's mission helps to lead and maintain teacher participation in the school organization. The coordination and management of the program at the building level also involves gaining district support along with parental support (Purkey & Smith, 1983). Furthermore, there is a connection with the school's environment because effective schools have safe, well-organized environments in which purposeful learning takes place (Purkey & Smith, 1983).

The creation of shared values and school culture is the third characteristic identified by Cohen (1983). Effective schools are places where collegiality is developed based on common organizational goals, objectives, missions, and beliefs. Teachers who exhibit similar and uniformly high expectations for students, similar views of student ability, and similar school goals are seen as collegial. This is the basis on which the school's culture is developed and disseminated to students. These beliefs, values and attitudes help students become socialized into the school's culture. In practice this is found when schools have clearly defined rules for student behavior, high expectations for learning, and a means of recognizing student growth and achievement. The difference in effective schools is that the prevailing view of teachers working behind closed doors carries less weight than the shared goals of the professional staff (Lortie, 1975).

Little (1982, 1987, 1990, 1992) furthers the concept of shared values and school culture in her work with staff development as an implementation route to effective schools. She indicates that in successful schools there are two very important norms: a) norm of collegiality, and b) norm of experimentation. She describes the norm of collegiality as expectations of teachers working together (1982). "Work[ing] together is most usefully elaborated as an array of specific interactions by which teachers discuss, plan for, design, conduct, analyze, evaluate, and experiment with the business of teaching" (Little, 1982, p. 338). The norm of experimentation focuses on attitudes and beliefs teachers hold about teaching and learning. Specifically, this norm suggests that analysis, evaluation, and experimentation are an important element in helping to maintain and continually improve the success of the school. These norms serve the purpose of bringing teachers and administrators together so common values about important issues within the school develop. It also helps to foster shared beliefs about the work of the school. The outcome is the development of a school community.

Research on shared values and school culture has led to further research into professionalization of teaching and collegiality. Sykes (1990) and others (Kruse, Louis, & Bryk, 1994; McLaughlin, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1992, 1994a, 1994b), suggest that an effective school is a place that has developed a community of learners. This community is built on a common culture that is based in collegial relationships. Sykes (1990) suggests three principles useful to the formation of the professional community. First, the school culture should be developed to guide the work of the school. Socialization into this culture is encouraged through yearly review of the school's mission and establishing goals and targets for teachers that assist in defining universal norms for the community (Reinken, 1995). Second, faculty working collegially should participate in the construction and coordination of the curriculum. Third, teachers should develop a broader knowledge base so they can interact collegially with groups inside and outside the school about the practice of teaching. To this end, it is important that the school community include external participants (i.e., parents, community, and central office staff). These groups are important because they help to create and maintain a positive environment in which a central focus on good teaching and learning remains constant. Moreover, they provide the support necessary for teachers to focus on fundamentals of best practice.

Having and applying these elements of effective schools are two very different things. Good and Brophy (1986) suggest that while many schools and school districts are applying the results of effective research, there is little information on how well or in what way the implementations relate to student performance. First, these characteristics are broad generalizations that mean different things to different groups. Second, evaluation across sites lacks comparative data because analysis of student achievement takes on many forms and formats. Third, the characteristics as they stand are very broad and sometimes overwhelming to schools because of ever changing factors (i.e., lack of teacher, student and administrator stability, change in programming and curriculum, and the continual increase of information on necessary characteristics needed for effective schools). The result is that schools come to a point where implementation is too overwhelming. It might be more helpful for school personnel to use more specific concepts of best practices that focus on aspects of teaching and learning in order to make gains in student achievement.

Best Practice in Language Arts Programs

The research on teaching, teacher change, and best practices within language arts programs helps us to better understand what happens within the classroom. The difficulty is that this research is based on individual teachers, not school wide programs even though this research appears to help teachers better understand their role within the school wide program. For our purposes, we have reviewed classroom practices that focus on language arts at the elementary school level. The results of our review suggest that in both empirical and theoretical literature concerned with best practices, long lists of very specific characteristics are usually given (Flippo, 1998; Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi, 1996; Samuels, 1988). For the purposes of this paper, we have developed broader, more inter-related concepts such as those found in Cohen's (1983) work on effective schools. By using broader concepts, we are able to see the total picture of classroom practice. Thus, the following characteristics are used not as a list, but as a way to describe the aspects of effective elementary language arts classroom practices: a) a well articulated curriculum, b) a focus on teacher attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, c) a focus on learning behaviors, d) an understanding of classroom environment, e) continual evaluation and assessment, and f) reflection and research. By describing the characteristics of effective classroom practice, we are in a position to better understand components of exemplary school wide language arts programs.

First, a well articulated language arts curriculum needs to recognize that literacy is used for a variety of purposes in multiple contexts (Goodman, 1994). Furthermore, it should integrate the language arts across disciplines. The materials should be appropriate for the developmental level of the learner, and should respect cultural lines so that diversity is honored, celebrated and understood (Heath, 1983; Indrisano & Paratore, 1991; Lenski, 1998; Reutzel & Cooter, 1996; Routman, 1988; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Wolfram, 1991). Thus, a well-articulated curriculum emphasizes the importance and function of reading and writing both inside and outside the classroom. In order to achieve this, well defined objectives and goals are necessary.

Second, teacher behaviors impact how the language arts curriculum is planned and implemented in the classroom and visa versa. In best practice classrooms teachers model literacy (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Flippo, 1998; Hoffman, 1991; Pressley, Rankin & Yokoi, 1996; Thomas & Barksdale-Ladd, 1997). Teachers present information in ways that balance needed skills and cognitive strategies. They also strive to develop in their students an appreciation of language and an understanding that reading and writing are important communication tools used in all aspects of life. Furthermore, the on going assessment influences the decisions that drive their instruction. Thus, it is difficult to separate teaching from curriculum since the relationship between the two is reciprocal (Pressley, Rankin & Yokoi, 1996).

In addition, it is difficult to describe teacher behaviors without an understanding of the beliefs, attitudes and knowledge that drive these behaviors. Teachers' attitudes about their work, their understanding of literacy, and their relationships to students are very important to the instruction that they deliver (Danielson, 1996; Short & Burke, 1996). Teachers who have caring, thoughtful, and fair attitudes about their work and students are often found in best practice classrooms (Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi, 1996). These best practice teachers hold steadfast beliefs that are grounded in philosophy. It is also evident that these teachers have a thorough knowledge base that goes beyond language arts. This knowledge includes an understanding of pedagogy, child development, and language development as well as learning theories (Shulman, 1987). The outcome is that these teachers' philosophy, beliefs, and knowledge are articulated and reflected in their daily practice. In fact, student literacy understandings reflect their teacher's beliefs (Thomas & Barksdale-Ladd, 1997). Some best practice teachers have the ability to reflect on and articulate their beliefs. These teachers usually become leaders and models of best practice (Evans, 1995; Routman, 1991; Schon, 1987).

The third characteristic of an effective language arts program concerns the learner. Students in quality classrooms are excited, engaged, and interested in learning (Brause & Mayher, 1991; Strickland & Feeley, 1991). Successful programs empower students by providing choice within the daily curriculum. This allows students to become active decision makers who set personal goals, take risks, work collaboratively as well as alone, and use literacy for real purposes (Flippo, 1998). These students are also able to articulate the program using the same vocabulary as their teachers (Thomas & Barksdale-Ladd, 1997). An outcome is that students put forth their best efforts and find success in becoming members of a literate community (Pike, Campain & Mumper, 1997; Routman, 1991).

The fourth characteristic of an effective language arts program involves the classroom environment. Teachers who engage in best practices have inviting classrooms filled with a wide variety of print materials and places designated for displaying students' literary works. The classroom environments foster empowerment by encouraging students to take risks, work collaboratively, and have freedom to make decisions about their learning. In other words, there will be a positive view of what the learner needs in order for learning to take place. Thus, quality instruction occurs when a variety of meaningful texts are used and high level thinking is encouraged (Flippo, 1998; Lenski, 1998; Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi, 1996; Reutzel, & Cooter, 1996; Templeton, 1995; Zemelman, Daniels, Hyde, 1993).

The fifth characteristic, evaluation and assessment, is found in both the effective school literature and the best practice literature. For the purposes of this paper, we discuss evaluation and assessment as characteristics that overlap both sets of literatures. Both evaluation and assessment are related to continual change within teaching and learning. Evaluation is a process of analyzing and comparing information in order to build knowledge and theories about what should come next in the process of teaching, learning and school improvement. Assessment is used to help the evaluation process and should be meaningful and matched to instructional objectives (Allington & Walmsley, 1995; Zemelman, Daniels, Hyde, 1993). Evaluation of curriculum, teaching, learning, coordination, school mission, and classroom and school environment should also be informed by research and should inform the development of new programs within the classroom and school (Lenksi, 1998; Pogrow, 1998). All participants in the school should have frequent feedback so they can evaluate their own learning and development (Lein, Johnson, & Ragland, 1996). This feedback should be encouraging, reinforcing, and help to redirect the school's efforts in the process of developing a literate environment and literate participants (Pike, Campain, & Mumper, 1997; Routman, 1988).

The sixth characteristic, reflection and research, are key components in the literature on best practice because they build on evaluation and assessment and are critical in the development of school as community with a shared culture. The concept of reflection refers to "active, persistent, consideration of beliefs or knowledge based on what supports that belief or knowledge and on the consequences that follow" (Fisher, Fox, & Paille, 1996, p. 416). Research goes beyond reflection because it involves thoughtful wondering, questioning, problem solving, experimenting, and documenting insights that ultimately lead to changing practices (Routman, 1996). An outcome of engaging in reflective practice and research is that participants become continual learners who use theory to inform their practice and produce new theories of teaching and learning. Thus, teacher researchers link research and practice, which is the embodiment of reflective practitioners (Schon, 1987).

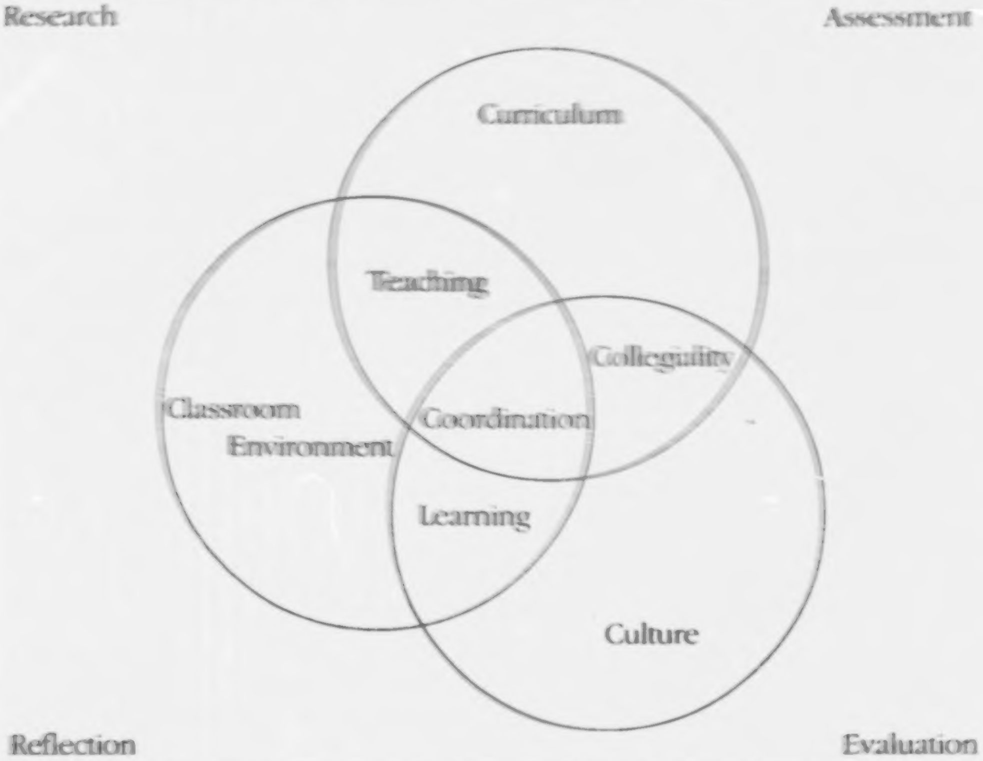
In summary, the best practice literature focuses on teachers within classrooms. The first four characteristics described here are a synthesis of the many concepts, ideas and lists suggested in the literature. The fifth and sixth characteristics support and inform the development of the first four characteristics. The evaluation and assessment characteristic will only inform practice if the school community engages in reflection and research. While these characteristics focus on activities found within best practice classrooms, it is more difficult to find whole schools that embody them (Pogrow, 1998).

Framework for School Wide Professional Practice

In this section, we integrate the effective schools literature with the literature on best practices within language arts programs. In doing so, we have created a framework that synthesizes both lines of research. Our purpose for this synthesis is to suggest a model that can be used in the development, execution, and evaluation of successful language arts programs. First, we will give a general description of the Framework for School Wide Professional Practice followed by a more specific description of each component.

The Framework for School Wide Professional Practice contains several components that are interrelated. At the heart of the model lies program support and coordination, which we interpret as the practices typically associated with leadership, management and joint decision-making in the school community. This component is critical because it provides the synergy to sustain the other components of the framework. The heart of the framework is formed by three intersecting concepts represented by three interlocking circles. The circles represent three primary aspects of professional practice that occur within school communities: curriculum, classroom environment and school culture. The overlap of circles represent the players' actions in the school. These include teaching, learning, and collegiality. Superimposed upon the overlapping circles are the means by which entire schools can strive toward best practice. This includes evaluation, assessment, reflection and research. Figure 1 represents this framework.

Figure 1. Framework for School Wide Professional Practice



The heart of the framework focuses on program support and coordination. This includes the active involvement of school leaders in nurturing the school-wide program in terms of development, implementation, and evaluation. Leadership is a key component in the school culture that promotes best practice. For the purposes of this paper, leadership is not defined as the administrator but persons who lead, have a vision, provide encouragement and maintain support for the program (Heller & Firestone, 1995). Program coordination ensures that time is devoted to the teaching and learning process, that adequate materials and supplies are available, and that safe learning environments are maintained. Program support ensures that the classroom environment is one in which purposeful learning is fostered. This is accomplished by having a mission and a vision that is well articulated.

The three interlocking circles within the Framework for Professional Practice include the language arts curriculum, the classroom environment and the school culture. In schools where best practices are exhibited, the language arts curriculum is well defined and well articulated. The manner in which the curriculum is delivered influences the classroom environment and involves teaching and instruction. The means by which a school becomes a learning environment involves the school's culture. While all schools exhibit these three components, the thing that separates best practice schools is the complete alignment between the three interlocking circles.

Furthermore, best practice schools are capable of articulating a common vision, mission and philosophy. These occur through the actions of all participants in the school. In our framework these actions are represented by teaching, learning and collegiality. For the purposes of this framework, we chose to use action words because actions are not people specific. For example, teaching is not done solely by the classroom teacher, but can be an action entered into by any knowledgeable individual: student, parent, volunteer. Thus, the classroom is a place where teachers and students are partners in teaching and learning; and collegiality is the means by which the school creates caring classrooms that reflect its mission. Hence, the circles are not mutually exclusive, but represent a symbiotic, dependent relationship.

For the purpose of this framework, we have superimposed evaluation, assessment, reflection and research over the interlocking circles to demonstrate their influence on all aspects of best practice and continual improvement that is essential in school reform. As suggested earlier, assessment and evaluation are important elements that inform the framework for professional practice. In addition, reflection and research also inform this practice. Together, they foster an environment open to inquiry that in turn influences effective professional practice.

In conclusion, our framework identifies components for effective schoolwide professional practice. We have purposely used generalized terms so that individual schools might conceptualize them in unique ways. It is highly unlikely that professionals across schools have the same things in mind when discussing the needs of their particular school. Thus, the uniqueness of this framework is the flexibility it provides schools in developing and reviewing language arts programs that meet the needs of their communities. Therefore, this framework can be used when developing and reviewing language arts programs that appear to be very different from one another.

Two Examples of Exemplary Schools

In this section, we describe two very different schools that exemplify the integration of characteristics and conditions found within our framework. The purpose of presenting a description of these schools is to demonstrate how the framework can be applied to school wide language arts programs that are very different from one another. These examples are the result of personal observations completed in both schools.

Onaway Elementary School. Onaway Elementary is a public school in central Ohio. The student population is economically, ethnically and racially diverse. Onaway Elementary School serves approximately 380 regular, special needs and gifted students grades K through 4. The school uses an inclusion model of grouping students by grade level (Onaway School, 1996).

Coordination and leadership is shared in this school. Some of the leadership has been under the guidance of Regie Routman, the Reading Specialist. Because of her interest in finding a way to reach children who struggled in a traditional reading program, she started researching and experimenting with a literature based instructional approach. As the students became more successful she found that other teachers shared her enthusiasm for this holistic approach. Over time and with support, what started as a program developed by two teachers became the language arts curriculum for the district (Routman, 1988). Today the program continues to improve as staff collaborate, study, and reflect on ways to make the program relevant to the children's developmental needs and real world experiences. As a teacher leader, Routman conferenced with teachers, demonstrated effective teaching, organized support groups, and worked with school volunteers in the publishing center.[1] Thus, she coordinated the school wide effort to facilitate literacy development for all children.

The principal, as the school leader, maintains the vision, seeks community and central administration support, endorses the continual change process that is a growing way of life for the school and district, and helps the staff research and study new initiatives. The quality educational program that the school fosters is based on long range goals, high expectations for teachers, and professional support. Leadership is based on shared decision-making and a focus on what is best for the students.

The shared decision-making is very visible in how teachers engage in their work. All staff engages collegially in continual review, reflection and evaluation of all aspects of the school wide literacy program. Even new teachers entering the school are "taken under a veteran's wing" so that they not only develop a deep understanding of the school's work but also start to engage in the school wide discussions. This staff collaboration has lead to the development of a common technical language that spills over to all participants of the school community. In that staff use this language in oral and written texts, students and parents have learned the school's literacy language. Thus, one outcome of collegial work is the development of a technical language that is an element of collegial work and professional community (Lortie, 1975).

A second outcome of the collegial work is that all school community members are focused on the work of teaching and learning. Staff members voluntarily meet weekly to discuss current literacy development issues, both within the school and within the literature. The teachers set the agenda and come prepared to talk about the topic of the day. Within the classrooms, students take on decision-making roles in the learning process. Even the very young students are engaged in collaborative work among themselves and with knowledgeable others. Because teachers model how learning takes place and they use a common language, students have developed a similar understanding of learning. Thus, there is less confusion about the learning process and how that takes place.

A third outcome of the collegial work is that inquiry has become an important part of the culture. The school's culture embraces risk-taking, experimentation and change. These teachers and students experiment and explore new ideas daily. But they do this with a wealth of knowledge developed through research, evaluation, and reflection. The teachers are kid watchers, continual learners and leaders in action research. They reach out to study the literature, but they also study their own practice and publish articles and books about what they have learned. Students likewise research, evaluate and reflect on their work. They write often and extensively about their learning. Thus, the culture of this school for all participants is one of being an active learner, engaging in collaborative knowledge development, and continually embracing life long learning skills.

The curriculum is based on the whole language philosophy. The staff has taken time to study and read research and then implement a program that is consistent throughout the school. The curriculum is an outgrowth of understanding child development and putting together appropriate grade level expectations. The philosophy and methodology of how to implement the grade level expectations are well understood by all of the school's community. The teachers use instructional approaches that are student centered, and require students to reflect, discuss, and create examples of their learning. The language arts curriculum is taught throughout the day and is integrated into every subject. Therefore, when observing in this school, it becomes difficult to tell when a specific subject is being taught. The total day revolves around becoming literate across the curriculum.

The outcome is that the school environment is one of caring, excitement, and responsibility towards learning—a love of learning. The physical environments both inside and outside the classrooms are arranged for the comfort of all, are filled with examples of learning, and have an overflow of materials to be used for this purpose. The staff and students have a common understand of what is important to learn, and how to engage in the learning process. Thus, no matter what type of grouping arrangement you come upon in this school, the staff, the children, or the parents, all are engaged in personal and collaborative literacy development.

Benchmark School. Benchmark School, in eastern Pennsylvania, is an independent school founded in 1970 for the purpose of providing instruction for bright underachievers who have reading difficulties that are not attributed to emotional or neurological problems. Approximately 185 students in grades 1 through 8 currently attend the school. There are 12 or 13 students in each class with one lead teacher and two teachers-in training who lend assistance during the language arts/reading block. All teachers are state certified and many have advanced degrees in education.

Coordination and leadership are obvious at Benchmark School. Irene Gaskins, the school's Director, is extremely supportive of the students, the teachers, and the program itself. She provides the impetus and energy for promoting the school's vision and philosophy. She does this by being very visible both within and outside the school. She avidly writes about the school's programs, conducts research at Benchmark, and shares her work nationally and internationally.

Gaskins has created an atmosphere where many people serve as school leaders. For instance, monthly inservices are held for professional development of all school personnel. At times, teachers from Benchmark conduct the inservices themselves. At other times, Gaskins presents them, and more frequently, outside experts present them. Parents also play an important role in the success of the program. On average, an hour and a half of homework is assigned each night, and parents are expected to oversee this work as well as read to their children on a daily basis.

The purpose, philosophy, and goals of Benchmark School are very well articulated by teachers, administrators, and parents. For example, after visiting the school for a week, we learned that the school's purpose is to create an environment where bright underachievers in reading receive: a) a strong academic background which will enable them to meet with academic success in a regular school setting after leaving Benchmark; b) guidance to become confident, mature, and productive members of society; and c) parental support for achieving and maintaining success in academic, social, and emotional areas. The school's philosophy states that each student is a unique individual whose potential has not been realized. In implementing this philosophy, teachers have created a learning environment that respects the uniqueness of each child. Emphasis is placed on students overcoming the frustration and fear of failure and accepting themselves as persons of dignity and integrity. The goal of the language arts program at the Benchmark School is to provide students with a positive school experience by introducing them to specific strategies that will help them become more successful readers, writers, and learners (Benchmark School, 1997).

The language arts curriculum contains several common instructional activities used at all grade levels. For example, "Word Detectives", which involves direct instruction in decoding and word identification, has been developed based on several years of research by Gaskins and her colleagues (Gaskins, Ehri, Cress, O'Hara, & Donnelly, 1997). Other examples of common cross grade level instruction include required daily reading both in and out of school, language discovery journals, process writing, and an emphasis on reading comprehension strategies. There is also a school-wide belief that reading from a variety of texts, including basals and literature, be done both in and out of the classroom.

Benchmark teachers believe that delayed readers benefit from direct instruction. They work collegially to provide instruction grounded in the school's philosophy. In addition, they not only have well developed knowledge about human learning, but they also have ownership of the language arts program in order to use best practices to help individuals learn. While teachers recognize the unique differences among children in their classrooms, they have high expectations that all children can succeed. Teachers and students work together to set personal goals. Students have choice in what they read and write, and they use the same technical vocabulary as their teachers when talking about their language arts program. As a result, everyone is excited, engaged, and interested in learning.

The culture of Benchmark School enables each classroom to become an effective learning environment—one that is warm, well-organized, and inviting. Classrooms are places where teachers and students are partners in learning. Thus, the classroom is a collegial atmosphere, most likely due to the belief that all learners, students and teachers alike, need to experience success. Phrases such as "Let's put forth our best effort" are very common. Therefore, within the school's community, a common technical language is shared by all participants and used to articulate the culture.

Action research and inquiry abound at the Benchmark School. School personnel truly believe that assessment and evaluation should inform practice. As a result, teachers and administrators meet regularly to select, read, and discuss current research articles. The discussion usually centers on the classroom implications of the research. Teachers will often adapt the ideas discussed in the literature and will discuss how they did or did not work in their classroom. Thus, participation in the research group provides a forum for inquiry. In addition, nationally known literacy experts have visited the school to work with teachers for extended periods of time (Benchmark School, 1997).

The Framework in Action

The examples presented allowed us the opportunity to show how these two very different schools operationalize components of the framework. In both schools, there is strong leadership that helps to maintain the school's philosophy and program coordination. The leadership also helps to maintain the focus on the collegial culture that is inquiry based. Both schools have a well articulated curriculum implemented across all classrooms by use of a common language and methods of instruction. In both schools, the curriculum is grounded in research. Within the classroom environment, there are expectations for both students and teachers that focus on learning. All community members are life-long learners in these schools. Teachers model this by continual evaluation, reflection and research and share this knowledge through articles and books they write. In both schools, professional practices are based on knowledge gained through action research involving the school community.

While both schools have similar understandings of the framework's components, in actuality, the daily practice shows us the unique ways in which they are operationalized. For example, even though both schools exhibited strong leadership, which helped to coordinate the program, leadership was the responsibility of different people. At Onaway, the Reading Specialist held the central leadership position while at Benchmark, the school's Director assumed the central role. In the area of curriculum, Onaway uses a holistic approach by immersing children in literacy while Benchmark takes a more structured, systematic approach to literacy learning. As would be expected, the classroom environment at Onaway displayed a wealth of student generated materials whereas the environment at Benchmark focused more on strategies for learning.

Regardless of how these schools operationalized the framework components, the outcome remains the same. Students are expected to become successful literate members of society. Interestingly, even with this outcome, neither school would believe it has achieved the perfect program as evidenced by their continual research and refinement of their respective programs.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have conceptualized a Framework for School Wide Professional Practice. This framework integrates two broad areas of research and our observations of two exemplary schools. The framework can be useful to educators and administrators developing and reviewing school wide language arts programs.

The difficulty in using a language arts framework such as ours is that schools may separate components of the framework and try to develop them individually. Furthermore, implementing such a framework is time consuming and difficult, as any exemplary practice is. However, working on one component without the interaction of other components does not lead to the inter-relatedness suggested by this framework. In order to create a community and consensus within that community, it is critical that everyone participates in the development of the language arts program. From our experience and our literature review, we have learned that there is no "magic formula" for developing effective language arts programs. However, our framework does allow schools the opportunity to develop unique programs based on their needs.

In developing this framework, we have brought together the general ideas found in the effective schools literature with the specific ideas found in the language arts literature such that a more focused approach to the development of school wide program implementation is possible. We recognize that successful reform efforts are not linear in their conceptualization or their implementation. As our framework suggests, there are many components that simultaneously influence the process. These components are necessary for the development of school wide best practice but do not need to be implemented with equal weight. In other words, the context of the learning community determines the emphasis or de-emphasis of individual components at any point in time. In conclusion, this framework recognizes the complexity of the process of true reform and gives educators a template on which they can focus their efforts.

Author's Note

[1]Even though Regie Routman is retired from the school district, she continues to act as a school consultant.

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A NEW VIEW OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE OF PEER COACHING IN EFFECTING CHANGE IN THE PRIMARY LITERACY CLASSROOM

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Abstract

The Reading Success Network (RSN) is a joint initiative of fifteen Comprehensive Assistance Centers designed to improve student reading achievement by developing a national network of teacher-coaches who support classroom teachers' efforts to provide powerful instruction in reading. The RSN training consists of four key components: using authentic literacy assessment, training in literacy interventions, using data to make instructional decisions, and using peer and team coaching to enhance results. The National Reading Panel notes that evidence exists that supports the idea that professional development opportunities seem to facilitate teacher change and sometimes student achievement(Langenberg et al., 2000). However, they note that there is need for more information about details of successful programs. The primary purpose of this report is to describe the RSN program and report preliminary data from the RSN pilot schools. Specifically this report includes: types of activities teachers participated in, initial teacher/system changes, demographics of schools involved in the initiative, and lessons learned from the initial trainings.

Introduction

The America Reads Challenge is a bipartisan, nationwide invitation to all Americans to collaborate with schools, teachers and parents to ensure that every child will read well by the end of third grade. The challenge was issued because as a nation we have failed to ensure that all children read efficiently and effectively by the end of third grade. Approximately 38% of third graders read below the basic level; this is a statistic that has shown minimal improvement over twenty-five years (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Though many of these struggling readers come from economically disadvantaged environments, children with reading difficulties do come from all income levels and household types. These children who struggle with learning to read are at higher risk of other school-related problems, making it important to provide early intervention.

Reading research (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 1996; Hiebert, 1994; Pinnell, 1989) has shown that differentiated, strategic instruction informed by diagnostic assessment is effective in teaching reading to children who face reading difficulties. However, too often assessments are test and file procedures. Many school districts need help with developing ongoing classroom assessment that provides teachers with information that aligns current research on the reading and writing process with their district and state standards (Farr, 1992). For teachers to effectively use differentiated instruction, they must be able to assess individual students and then plan targeted strategic instruction based on the information and data gleaned from the assessment. Teachers in the past have received little guidance in developing and interpreting individualized diagnostic assessments despite the fact that they are the most likely people who need this information (Calfee & Hiebert, 1996; Pearson, Destafano, & Garcia, 1998; Stiggens, 1991).

Recent research (Langenberg et al., 2000; Roehler & Duffy, 1996; Sacks & Mergendoller, 1997; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) suggests that professional development efforts can facilitate teacher change and potentially improve student achievement in reading. For professional development programs to be effective several factors must be present. In their recent review of the literature, Anders, Hoffman, and Duffy (2000) highlight characteristics of "successful" professional development activities that include the following: (a) intensive levels of support with sustained and concentrated effort; (b) monitoring, coaching and or clinical support in the context of practice; (c) opportunities for reflection and tools for teachers to reflect on their own practices systematically as they move toward change; (d) opportunities for deliberation, dialogue and negotiation, as conversation and discussion are key components in the change process; (e) voluntary participation, and (f) opportunities for collaboration among different role groups.

The National Reading Panel's recent report (Langenberg et al., 2000) highlights the lack of descriptive research about resources required, amount of instruction, and frequency of instruction needed for successful professional development. They also note that there is little information on how long teacher change is sustained and how to best sustain the positive changes. The current report is an initial attempt to gather and report such information. The primary purpose of this report is to describe the program and report preliminary data from the Reading Success Network (RSN) pilot schools. Specifically the types of activities participated in by the teachers, initial teacher/system changes, demographics of the participating schools and lessons learned from the initial trainings will be discussed.

The RSN Program

RSN is a national professional development effort on the part of a network of fifteen Comprehensive Assistance Centers (CAC) to improve K-3 teachers' capacity for addressing the instructional needs of struggling readers. The CAC program is a network of 15 regional centers funded by the US Department of Education (USDE) under the 1994 Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) to help recipients of funds under the ESEA to improve teaching and learning in schools. The professional development provided through the RSN is closely aligned with standards for assessment in reading and writing as highlighted in recent research reports such as Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children(Snow et al., 1998) and Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing (Johnston et al., 1994). These reports suggest that all teachers need to have the ability to diagnosis students' literacy status to guide instruction so that all students achieve a high level of critical literacy (Calfee & Hiebert, 1996).

RSN professional development is aligned also with the standards of the National Staff Development Council and those of the USDE. Characteristics of effective professional development identified by research(Anders et al., 2000; Calfee & Hiebert, 1996; Helmar-Salasoo & Kahr, 1999; Langenberg et al., 2000; Lieberman & Miller, 2000; Loucks-Horsley, Hewson, Love, & Stiles, 1998; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996; Pearson et al., 1998; Stiggens, 1991) are integrated into the RSN professional development program. These characteristics include opportunities for teachers to practice what has been discussed or demonstrated, to act as action teams, and to be more reflective about their practice through team activities and journaling.

Although the RSN process is intended to be aligned with individual school settings, all RSN programs use the following processes to facilitate change: (a) examination of local reading data to determine the need for RSN training and implementation; (b) exploration of reading assessment as a vehicle for improving the teaching and learning process; (c) use of peer coaching to facilitate long term support through teacher to teacher mentoring, and (d) time for planning for implementation of RSN in their respective school districts to support existing reading initiatives and to further reading achievement.

Training Components

Diagnosis and Intervention

The training on diagnostic assessment and strategic interventions is modeled on the research of Marie Clay in An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (Clay, 1993) and in Words Their Way: Word Study For Phonics, Vocabulary And Spelling Instruction(Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2000). Another resource used for the diagnostic assessment and intervention portion of the training was *Taking a Reading: A Teacher's Guide to Reading Assessment* (Southern California Comprehensive Center, 1998). The training emphasizes how to use the assessment tools, when to use them and how to share the information with their colleague teachers. Emphasis is placed on using assessment tools such as alphabet and sound recognition; book and print awareness; phonemic awareness; and retelling. In districts where there are English as Second Language (ESL) learners, the program addresses issues of assessment and interventions for ESL learners. Participants are taught processes for brainstorming with colleagues to design effective interventions; they also are provided with specific interventions and strategies aligned with the assessment tools.

Data Analysis and Coaching

Training on teacher to teacher peer coaching was developed using the research of Showers and Joyce (1996). The purpose of the coaching is to increase the sustainability of the program and to provide teachers with the capacity and tools to use to become more reflective about their practice of reading instruction. Agreements are made between the teacher-coaches to collect data and use data to inform instruction. The data, intervention strategies, and assessment tools are the core of the conversations of the coaching pairs and school teams. The Showers and Joyce model of peer coaching trains teachers to view the teacher they are observing as the "coach," then to use reflective journaling to react to how the techniques of the "coach" can be used in their own professional practice.

The participants are taught the process of forming a learning community that is able to use data and group conferencing to improve reading instruction. As a part of this process, teachers learn how analyze reading, demographic and process data with their colleagues; then how to use this information to inform their decisions about individual and group instruction.

Support Network

A support network and systems of support and opportunities for practice were provided to enhance the sustainability of the program. The technical assistance providers offered opportunities for practice of skills and feedback within the training, during teacher to teacher coaching activities, and through on-site visits. Regularly scheduled follow-up meetings, principals' support groups, listserves, and dialogues on current reading research are a few of the methods used to provide this support.

Data Collection Methods

The regional directors of the CACs contracted with a team of evaluators to conduct a national evaluation of the RSN. The RSN coordinators, trainers, and evaluators from each region worked cooperatively to collect data from the RSN schools and teachers for this evaluation. The demographic and baseline student data in this report comes directly from the interim report (McBee, Hutzel, & Hambrick, 2000) of this evaluation. All tables and figures are derived from the interim report (McBee et al., 2000).

Data were collected from a variety of sources and a variety of levels of implementation. At the regional level, RSN trainers completed the Regional RSN Information Survey (see Appendix A) to supply information about the initial implementation and focus of their regional program. The survey consisted of 10 open ended questions. The first nine questions asked for information in the following areas: specific topics and order of topics covered in training, length and frequency of training sessions, frequency of coaching meetings, frequency of principal meetings, any modifications made to the initial RSN program, issues being grappled with by the coordinators; and whether the program was meeting the expectations of the participants. Additional qualitative data were gathered from regional trainers during focus groups and discussions at national RSN meetings.

At the school level, principals or coaches completed the Demographic Survey for Participating Schools (see Appendix B) to provide demographic data from all schools participating in the RSN. Participating RSN schools were defined as those sites where at least one coach had received RSN training and RSN was being implemented at the site.

The RSN trainers and/or evaluators from each participating CAC selected a sample of their participating schools to closely examine the RSN implementation and impact of the initiative. These selected sites became the target schools. Each target school met the following criteria: (a) Coach(es) and principal attended RSN training and network meetings; (b) Schools had an implementation plan; (c) Coach(es) are working with at least one other teacher at the school site on an ongoing basis to collect student achievement data to make instructional decisions; (d) Principal and coach(es) agree to participate in the national evaluation, which will include the collection of student achievement data and coach/teacher surveys; and (e) Target schools will be Title I schools, preferably those implementing schoolwide programs.

At the classroom level, teachers in RSN target schools completed the Student Achievement Record Sheet (see Appendix C) to provide students' reading levels in the fall of 1999. Teachers also provided student data in the spring of 2000 to be included in the final report for the national evaluation. These teachers were in the RSN target schools.

Preliminary Data

Schools Participating in RSN

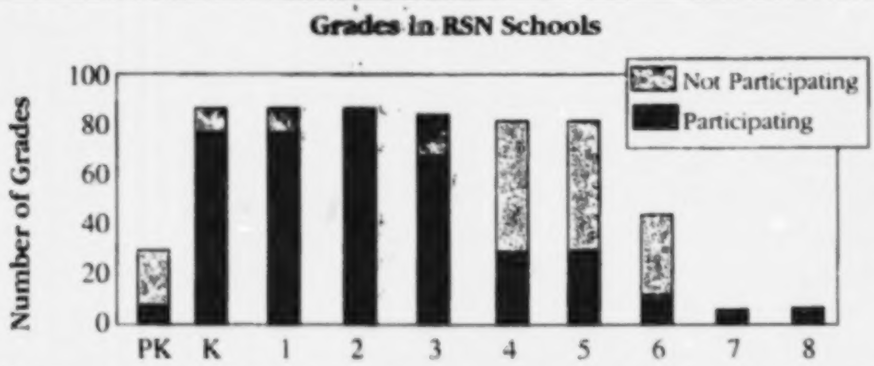
Eleven of the fifteen Comprehensive Assistance Centers (CAC) were able to provide initial data for the preliminary report and the interim evaluation report. Data from the Interim Evaluation Report(McBee et al, 2000) indicate 96 schools from 40 school districts in 19 states participated in the RSN. The report indicated that 632 teachers, 60 principals, and 46 administrators received training delivered by the CAC. In the 96 RSN schools, 226 people coached additional teachers and thereby expanding the impact of RSN throughout their school or district. Primarily, schools in urban (54.2%) and rural (31.1%) areas were trained, representing 85.3% of the participating schools. Almost 70% of the schools were operating a Title I Schoolwide Program (See Table 1). About one-third of the schools were on the state's low performing list or an identified Title I Program Improvement School. About three-fourths of the schools were either operating a Title I Schoolwide Program, on the state's low performing list, and/or identified as a Title I Program Improvement school. Approximately one-fourth did not fit any of these categories.

Table 1. Title I Schoolwide Programs and State Identified Low Performing Schools

Is your school operating a Title I Schoolwide Program?		
Yes	66	68.8%
No	28	29.2%
Not Reported	2	2.1%
Total	96	100%
Is your school on the state's low performing list or an identified Title I Program Improvement School?		
Yes	30	31.2%
No	52	54.1%
Not Reported	14	14.6%
Total	96	100%

The RSN was originally developed for teachers of kindergarten through third grade. However, as CAC staff adapted the program for their own regions, some chose to implement the program in grades beyond third grade. This occurred for a variety of reasons. In some cases, schoolwide implementation seemed to best fit the needs of the school staffs to support a common purpose. Other sites found strong RSN supporters in teachers beyond third grade and needed the support of the intermediate teachers to insure RSN implementation. Other sites were struggling to help their upper elementary students read at grade level and expressed the need for RSN for their students. Figure 1 below show the grades served by RSN participating schools as well as the grades of RSN teachers.

Figure 1.



Teachers in the participating RSN schools had a wide range of teaching experience (see Table 2). The Demographic Questionnaire asked for teaching experience of the teachers in Grades K-3 because those were the grades anticipated implementing the RSN. Note that these figures include all K-3 teaching staff at RSN schools, including those who did not paticipate in RSN.

Table 2. Years of Experience

Teaching Experience	Number of Staff	Percent of Staff
0 to 1 years	159	11.7%
2 to 5 years	285	21.0%
6 to 10 years	230	16.9%
11 to 15 years	212	15.6%
16 or more years	472	34.8%
Total	1,358	100.0%

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Students in RSN Schools

Table 3 shows all students by race/ethnicity in RSN participating schools. Latino/Hispanic, Caucasian/White, and African American students predominated in the RSN schools. Students of color made up 69% of the total. Note that all of the students described may not be in a classroom where RSN is being implemented. However, the race/ethnicity information does show the composition of the total student body at RSN schools.

Table 3. Ethnicity of Students

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percent of Students
American Indian	1,596	3%
Latino/Hispanic	16,085	34%
African American	12,402	26%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1,926	4%
Caucasian/White	15,013	31%
Other	986	2%
Total	48,008	100%

About two-thirds of the students were eligible for free or reduced lunches. Approximately one-fourth were ESL learners. A small percent, were migrant students or receiving special education. Note that Table 4 provides statistics for all students in RSN schools and some of the students were not in classrooms where RSN was being implemented.

Table 4 . Characteristics of Students

Characteristic	Number of Students	Percent of Students
Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch	31,169	64.9%
Limited English Proficient	12,078	25.2%
Special Education	2,687	5.6%
Migrant	653	1.4%

Evaluation coordinators in each region selected a sample of schools implementing RSN to provide additional data about the activities of the RSN implementation and the impact on students. The identified schools are labeled target schools. Forty Four target schools are included in this report. Within these sites, student achievement data for 8,918 students from 367 classrooms were provided. Table 5 describes these 8,918 students in the "target" schools who are in classes with RSN-trained teachers.

Table 5. RSN Classrooms and Students Providing Achievement Data by Grade Level Fall of 1999

Grade Level	Number of RSN Classes Providing Student Data	Number of Students in RSN Classes
PK	2	48
K	75	1,976
1	99	2,488
2	89	2,130
3	79	1,744
4+	23	532
Total	367	8,918

When teachers implementing RSN were asked to assess their students' independent reading level as of October 1, 1999, the majority of the students were reported to be reading below grade level. Teachers used their state standards or district standards to determine the criteria for reading on grade level. The data in Table 6 contain the reading level of students by grade for those RSN classroom students in kindergarten through third grade. Pre-kindergarten students were not included in this table because of their low frequency.

Table 6. Students' Initial Independent Reading Levels

Students' Grade in School	Independent Reading Level						Total Number of Students
	Below Grade Level		At Grade Level		Above Grade Level		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
K	717	36%	1,238	63%	21	1%	1,976
1	1,801	72%	638	26%	49	2%	2,488
2	1,450	68%	580	27%	100	5%	2,130
3	1,055	60%	488	28%	201	12%	1,744
Total	5,023	60.2%	2,944	35.3%	371	4.4%	8,338

Over 60% of kindergarten through third grade students were reading below grade-level as of October 1, 1999; 35% were reading at grade level, and 4.4% were reading above grade level. Note that there were half as many students reading below grade level in kindergarten (36%) as first grade (72%). This trend continued in second and third grades.

Preliminary Training Data

The CAC's designed training in collaboration with the administrators and staff of pilot schools; therefore, length of training and training topics varied based on the need assessments and requests of the pilot school districts. Additionally, some trainings were spread across a school year while others were held during the summer because of travel constraints. The mean number of training days was 10.75. The median was 7.5 days and the mode was 5 days for the 1998-1999 school year.

Training topics varied based on the school district needs. The primary components of RSN training are diagnosis, intervention, data analysis to inform instruction; peer coaching for results; and building a support network. CACs reported training on the following topics:

- Overview of recent reading research and components of balanced reading instruction programs
- Assessments: letter identification, concepts of print, phonemic awareness, running records, cloze procedures, developmental spelling and writing, and retelling
- Intervention Strategies: Guided Reading, talk strategies, comprehension strategies, motivational strategies, writing, ESL, phonemic awareness, concepts of print, and word study
- Different types of coaching models including: Peer Coaching, cognitive coaching, expert coaching, and study teams
- Using data to inform appropriate instructional strategies (demographic, process, and outcome) and
- Involving families and tutors in literacy activities.

Coordinators reported that training techniques involved lecture, small group interactions, role playing, and onsite technical assistance.

Coaching and Team Activities

All of the CACs reported that school teams met to peer coach and plan literacy activities. The frequency of meetings ranged from once a week to three times a year; five of the eleven coordinators reported that their school districts met to either coach each other or as a school team at least once a month. The coaching and team activities length ranged from 30 minutes to half a day. Additionally, several CACs reported holding principal network meetings as frequently as once a month.

Typically teacher to teacher coaching consisted of teachers going to observe their partner's reading instruction and then writing reflectively in their journals about their reaction to the lesson they saw presented. Some of these teams also reported meeting first to discuss what the lesson for the day would be and the goals of the lesson. Since feedback is omitted in this model of coaching some of the school districts choose to use an expert model of coaching, therefore the reading specialist or lead teacher in a district (in the role of expert coach) observed the teacher (coachee) and then gave feedback to the teacher who had been observed.

Team meetings were times for RSN school teams to come together as a learning community and/or as an action research team. Generally the purpose of team meetings fell into four categories:

1. *Formative evaluation and enhancement of program:* Teams would discuss progress of implementation, logistics of setting up and sustaining study groups and coaching opportunities, ways to encourage more parental involvement in reading, development of materials for small group instruction, and adaptation or adoption of assessment instruments for ESL learners.
2. *Team learning:* Instruction on assessments or interventions not covered in initial training such as running records, understanding new standards based literacy curriculum, and discussion of agreed upon research readings
3. *Data analysis of student work:* Teams would meet and bring assessment protocols to discuss possible interventions and strategies for students who were experiencing difficulties or potential groups of children (learning disabled, ESL, migrant, minorities) whose needs were not being met.
4. *Network Support:* Collaboration with peers about successes, failures, and strategies.

Additionally, several CACs reported that principals in their regions met as a "principal's" group. CAC coordinators reported that these meetings covered some of the same topics as the teacher groups, such as reading research, components of balanced reading instruction, and using diagnostic assessment. They also discussed several topics that had an administrative flavor such as: providing support to faculty in implementing RSN, arranging for scheduling adjustments, leading restructuring of school to accommodate grade level peer coaching groups, and long range planning for implementation of the reading instruction program.

Teacher and System Change

The RSN initiative hoped to effect change in system and teacher practices, with the ultimate impact seen in the improvement of students' reading abilities. Several of the CACs reported on several early indicators of system and teacher change. One CAC indicated that teachers made statements such as the following in response to the question: How has RSN improved instruction?

> "I feel I was better able to pinpoint areas of difficulty."
>
> "I use more strategies when a child is struggling . . . conferencing with another teacher on a different grade level reinforced strategies. We felt less isolated and more accountable."

Another CAC reported two major changes as a result of the RSN training. First, the new belief of teachers that low achieving students can make accelerative progress in literacy activities through appropriate intervention strategies. Second there was an increase and positive change in teacher collaboration. The following quote from a participant illustrates that change.

> "Collaborating with our peers about successes and failures was an important strategy for us. We had partners in this endeavor; we were not alone. We learned from each other and taught each other as well."

Other striking and long reaching system change revolved around the accommodations made to facilitate coaching and study teams. Specifically other indicators of system and teacher changes noted by the coordinators included the following: (a) teachers were provided with release time to attend training; (b) principals participated in training and planning for full implementation; (c) principals instituted a plan to acquire tutors; (d) districts provided stipends for teachers to attend training; (e) school teams with principals help arranged schedules so teachers could coach and meet as a team; (f) districts provided substitutes for team planning time where appropriate; (g) teachers requested additional training after realizing their own needs, and (h) two of the CACs have preliminary data that shows improvement in students' reading scores.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The CACs reported several challenges and lessons learned from the pilot schools. Allocation of scarce resources such as time and personnel was a challenge for both schools and CACs. Finding time to schedule coaching and team meetings was a challenge for school teams; CAC coordinators reported having difficulty with providing frequent follow-up, technical assistance, and support because of the limited resources allocated to the pilot program.

One CAC from a rural region with geographic challenges reported solving the travel and time challenge by scheduling their initial training during the summer as an institute in conjunction with a summer reading program for K-3 children. This gave teachers the opportunity to practice with students, while solving some of the travel issues posed by the geography of the region. Follow-up was provided through listserve and "reunion" institutes. In an effort to solve some of the resource problems, CAC coordinators meet twice a year to provide a support network for the trainiers. At these meetings coordinators had the opportunity to discuss some of the innovative solutions that were used by their colleagues to allow resources to stretch further. Innovative uses of technology seemed to be one potential solution to resource problems.

CAC coordinators reported that gaining administrative support was crucial for initial implementation. The coordinators noted that fidelity to the RSN program was stronger when principals attended training activities. Coordinators also reported that providing a strong orientation of the RSN process was crucial to the program. A strong orientation seemed to be one key to greater administrative support, team cohesion and enhanced training effect.

Other challenges such as poor administrators, mobility of teachers and students, and the high cost of intensive support systems are still being worked out. It is hoped that with the use of action research teams and study teams, some of the solutions will come from the participants themselves.

Discussion

The RSN strives to improve the reading achievement of all children by utilizing system support to improve teaching practice. In school systems where administrators allocate resources such as stipends, substitutes, and their own time to insure implementation, RSN appears to be making a difference in literacy practice. Teachers' comments indicate a trend toward more reflective practice and differentiated instruction. Additionally, teachers have gained confidence that even their lowest-achieving students can make accelerative progress in reading and writing.

The RSN is in the early stages of implementation. Preliminary reports from the field indicate that it has potential for helping all students learn to read especially those most at risk. Preliminary data seem to indicate that the program is appropriately targeting students at risk for reading difficulties. The majority of the 48,000 students served are not reading on grade level (60%), are minority (69%) and are from high poverty environments (64%). More than 48,000 students a year are beginning to benefit from strategic literacy instruction.

Perhaps the most important component of this model is the teacher to teacher coaching and study team. Recent research (Anders et al., 2000; Hiebert & Taylor, 2000; Langenberg et al., 2000; Lieberman & Miller, 2000) suggests that professional development does help improve literacy practices and students learning. This research also points to the need to find ways to foster sustainability of the positive changes and progress made through professional development. Anders et al. suggest that school-based study teams have the potential to sustain system and teacher change after researchers and technical assistance providers move on. In many ways the coaching study team component is the equivalent of helping teachers to learn to fish rather than giving them a fish. School teams, through the study team approach and coaching model, have the potential to sustain themselves and the RSN process since the current coaches have the skills to train other teachers while continuing their own professional growth. Though initially RSN is resource intensive, with over fourteen hundred highly trained RSN teacher-coaches already in the field, RSN could become a potentially resource efficient method of enabling all teachers access to the research and methods necessary to teach children to read.

This report begins the documentation of the components of the RSN professional development model and annotates: resources used, training methods and components, and baseline student data. Certainly the forthcoming national evaluation will provide more information about the impact of the RSN on student reading achievement. In the meantime, there seems to be a consensus among the current pilot schools that RSN has added an important dimension to the literacy expertise of K-3 teachers.

Note of Thanks: The authors would like to thank the RSN regional coordinators, trainers and evaluators for helping to collect the data for this article and for the evaluation reports. Without their cooperation it would not be possible to document and annotate the implementation and progress of the RSN. Also, thanks to Dr. MacBee and her co-evaluators for sharing the data from the Interim Report.

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Appendix A. Comprehensive Center Reading Success Network Regional RSN Information

Region: ______________ Director: ______________

1. How many RSN coaches have or will have been trained?
   Coaches/Schools Coaches/Schools
   - 98-99 ______________ 99-00 ______________
2. Total # of days of initial RSN training provided by your Center:
   - Day One Topic: ______________
   - Day Two Topic: ______________
   - Day Three Topic: ______________
   - Day Four Topic: ______________
   - Day Five Topic: ______________
   - Day Six Topic: ______________
   - Additional Day Topics: ______________
3. Frequency of Coach's Contact Meetings:
   Length of meetings: ______________ Time of Day: ______________
   Location of meetings: ______________
   - Sample Topics: ______________

   Note: ______________
4. Frequency of Principal Contact Meetings: ______________
   Length of meetings: ______________ Time of Day: ______________
   Location of meetings: ______________
   - Sample Topics: ______________
5. CC Staff assigned to RSN: ______________
   - Role/Responsibilities: ______________
6. Others involved in training/coordination of RSN activities from your Region (SEA staff, etc.):
   Name: Affiliation: Role:
   ____
   ____
7. Provide a brief description of any modifications made to the RSN training by your Center on the following training topics:
   (What research, topics, key understandings are addressed?)
   - Data Analysis: ______________
   - Diagnosis & Intervention: ______________
   - Coaching: ______________
   - English Language Learners: ______________
   - Family Involvement: ______________
8. Has the RSN met the expectation of your participants? ______________
   If yes, in what way/s? If not, why? ______________
9. What issues are you currently grappling with in your RSN training, and/or support of your region's network? ______________
10. What would you like addressed at the August 5-6 CC RSN Meeting?

Appendix B. National Reading Success Network (RSN) Demographic Questionnaire for Participating Schools

School: ______________________________ Date: ___________________________
District: _____________________________ State: ___________________________

1. Grade levels at your school (circle all that apply).
   PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

2. Grade levels served by teachers participating in the Reading Success Network (circle all that apply).
   PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

3. Which category best describes your school?
   _____ Urban
   _____ Suburban
   _____ Rural

4. Indicate the number of children in your school from each of the ethnic groups listed below.
   _____ African American
   _____ Asian or Pacific Islander
   _____ Caucasian/White
   _____ American Indian/Alaska Native
   _____ Latino/Hispanic
   _____ Other (please specify):
   _____ Total Number of Children in Your School

5. How many students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch?

6. How many students are Limited English Proficient (LEP) or English Language Learners (ELL)?

7. How many students are Special Education students?

8. How many students are Migrant students?

9. Are you an operating Title I School-Wide Program?
   ____ YES _____ NO _____ DON'T KNOW

10. Is your school on your state's low-performing list or an identified Title I Program Improvement school?
    ____ YES _____ NO _____ DON'T KNOW

11. How many of the K-3 teaching staff at your school have years of teaching experience in the following categories?
    _____ 0-1 years
    _____ 2-5 years
    _____ 6-10 years
    _____ 11-15 years
    _____ 16 or more years

12. How did your school decide to become involved in the RSN?

Appendix C. Reading Success Network National Evaluation Student Achievement Record Sheet

District ______________________ State ______________

School ______________________ Grade Level __________

Teacher ______________ Coach (If not the classroom teacher) ________

Reading Code	Independent Reading Level
PK	Pre Kindergarten
K	Kindergarten
1	First Grade
2	Second Grade
3	Third Grade
4+	Fourth Grade or Higher

Identify the students in your classroom and indicate each child's independent reading level according to your state's grade level standards. Use the codes in the boxes above.

Student Name*	Assessment Considered/Used	Fall 1999 Reading Code	Assessments Considered/Used	Spring 2000 Reading Code

* Note: Use students' first names and first initial of their last name only.

HORIZONS IN ADULT, COLLEGE AND ELEMENTARY LITERACY LEARNING

USING LITERATURE TO DEVELOP WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR CAREER ACCELERATION

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Abstract

This paper explains the rationale and methods for integrating workplace literacy into high school English literature instruction. A brief historical review of workplace literacy in secondary public schools is presented, followed by a discussion of current workplace literacy programs. Examples of workplace literacy activities for literature used in a Senior English class include: (a) a business project report used with Beowulf, *(b) a flow chart to use for a presentation on* Elephant Man, *and (c) a newsletter format reporting on the Victorian Era historical period in English literature. Authentic examples of students' work are included.*

According to the NELS Report, 43.1% of the 1994 high school graduates continued their education in four-year colleges or universities, 22.4% attended junior colleges, and 6.9% went to a technical or vocational schools (NELS:88, 1996). Eventually, almost 100% entered the work force. One primary goal of American secondary education in the 1990's was to prepare students to be competent employees who would enhance the work force into the 21st century. The inclusion of workplace literacy instruction in high schools provided a means to accomplish this goal, but adding another core of courses to an already crowded curriculum was a problem. This paper presents a review of workplace literacy in the public secondary schools followed by a discussion of activities designed to integrate workplace skills into high school English classes.

Review of Workplace Literacy

History of Career Education

The inclusion of career education in the public schools was launched in 1971 by United States Office of Education Commissioner Sidney P. Marland, Jr., in a speech given to the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Marland stated that students in all levels of education needed to understand a relationship between the subject matter they were required to learn and the competencies required in a workplace setting. Rather than adding career preparation courses to the curriculum, workplace skills were to be infused into the existing course content. Benefits cited as a result of successful infusion of workplace competencies included an increase in students' academic achievement, use of members of the business community as classroom resource persons and provision of actual workplace experiences for students. Since all students would eventually enter the work force, the infusion approach applied to all students including those in a college-prep program. The infusion programs initiated nationally in the 1970's continued at the state level into the 1980's. For example, the Florida Department of Education in 1988 published its *Blueprint for Career Preparation*, a framework for career education from kindergarten through post-secondary education (Terry & Hargris, 1992).

Drastic changes for career education occurred in the 1990's (Terry & Hargris, 1992). Students preparing for the workplace needed to become knowledgeable in technological advancements in computers, software and communication tools. In addition, the role of the teachers had to change; teachers had to become guides to this new technology as the American work force expanded to compete on an international marketplace.

The most important guidelines for career education projecting into the 21st century were listed in *What Work Requires of Schools*, the report of the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (Scans, 1991). As a result of a year of interviews with business owners, managers, union representatives, and workers, this report compiled a list of competencies students need to acquire in order to succeed in the workplace. These competencies included: (a) basic skills in communication and math, (b) thinking skills of solving problems, making decisions, visualizing and knowing how to learn, (c) personal qualities of self-esteem, sociability, self-management and integrity, (d) resource management of time, money, materials, facilities, and human resources, (e) interpersonal skills of working with others, serving clients, exercising leadership, and negotiating (f) information acquisition, use, and processing, (g) systems awareness of understanding, improving, and designing complex systems, and (h) technology expertise of applying technology to tasks and maintaining the equipment.

New teaching strategies to meet the changing learning needs of students in modern society have also been noted (Brown, 1997). These youths were characterized as independent, technologically literate individuals whose learning will not be based on memorizing or on writing drills; instead they will want to put information to work, to do something. They want cooperative learning, flexibility in learning content and in their schedules, and variety in teaching methods and materials. The challenge for them will be to channel their strengths to connect school learning and workplace applications.

This brief historical review of career education over the past 30 years reaffirmed the need for students to become proficient in workplace literacy and adept in using technology, through continued infusion of workplace skills into existing school subject matter. In order to meet the future needs of workplace literacy infusion, major changes in the organization of schools and colleges have been advised, with interdisciplinary teams working together to integrate instruction and to apply it to real world contexts (Terry & Hargris, 1992).

Workplace Literacy Programs In Schools

One avenue for connecting school learning and workplace applications was the Tech Prep/Associates Degree (TPAD) program. TPAD programs were designed to meet the needs of "the neglected majority" of high school students (approximately 75% in most places) who are not likely to earn a college baccalaureate degree (Parnell, 1992). In these programs students prepared for the careers in rapidly growing occupations that require some postsecondary education to develop skills in applied sciences, math, communications and technology. Students in TPAD programs did not have to limit their studies to a narrow vocational or job-training program, nor did they have to meet the rigorous demands of a liberal arts, college-prep program.

Another avenue for connecting content knowledge and workplace literacy demands was the school-to-work program. It was designed to prepare students for high-tech careers, to rely on high quality academic instruction, and to lead to post-secondary and life-long learning. The passage of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 provided for work-based learning experiences for students and provided for access to college or other training options (Imel, 1995). The school-to-work program created new approaches to learning that include classroom teaching and workplace experiences for both college-prep as well as tech-prep students. Although college admissions are still based on traditional "Carnegie units", authentic teaching and learning school-to-work methods allowed students to apply academic learning to realistic problems. One method of authentic learning occurred in long-term group projects on complex issues, culminating in written and oral presentations of findings to groups of students, parents and community members. These projects encouraged students to develop research and communication skills, to develop interests and perhaps explore possibilities for a future career or to discover untapped abilities and interests which they could develop academically (Bailey & Merrit, 1997).

The school-to-work program has been integrated successfully into high school English classes. Workplace English provided a context-specific environment for students to learn to read and write for the workplace and use computers to gather information on the Internet (Boiarsky, 1997). A major focus of workplace English has been on the development of students' literacy skills for communication in various forms including letters, proposals, memoranda, position papers, instructions, documents, studies, etc. (Boiarsky, 1997; Northrop, 1997).

Workplace Literacy Activities for Literature

In addition to developing their workplace voice, students have the opportunity to explore another facet of their learning experience through reading literature in the workplace English classroom. Probst (1990) suggested that literature instruction should reflect the vision of literary experience as a coming-together of reader and text to create a significant event in a reader's intellectual and emotional life. Through reading literature, students learn to react more sensitively to the human condition and the environment in which we live, as well as to become *literate* and to sample literary classics (Boiarsky, 1997). If an English class limits the reading of literature to critical analysis of the work, many students who are not college-bound see little connection of reading to real life and do not read the classics.

By providing students with opportunities to respond to literature through reports, discussions, writing and presentations, teachers have helped students make connections between the literature they read and their real world. Initially, the teachers would collect *real* workplace artifacts, (i.e., project reports, letters, memoranda, proposals, brochures, flow charts and newsletters) and distribute these examples to the class. The teacher would then lead discussions on the purposes for these communication forms, provide specific examples of how they were actually used in the workplace setting, and highlight how the particular artifact's format (headings, charts, etc.) directly supports its usefulness in the workplace. Finally, the teacher demonstrates and leads the class in creating examples of how the workplace artifact's format could be adopted to the content of literature selections read by the class. The following are specific examples of students' authentic work from some of the small group activities we designed to infuse workplace skills into a traditional literature curriculum for high school English classes.

When students studied *Beowulf*, they wrote a project report on Bewolf s fight with the Grendel. They applied workplace writing to the literary elements of this epic poem. In this poem, a monster, Gendel, has terrorized the land of Herot for over 12 years. Beowulf and his men have decided to rid Herot of this monster. During this heroic struggle, Beowulf grabbed Grendel's arm and ripped it off. Grendel died, and Beowulf became a hero. A group of tech-prep high school seniors wrote the project report on *Beowulf* shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Beowulf Project Report

Beowulf

Manpower and Materials

- He will have 14 men.
- He will have swords and armor.
- There is a strong hall that is built.
- There is knowledge and experience.

Goals, Objectives, and Proposals

- To kill Grendel.
- To make the hall safe.
- To get revenge for killing the King's friend.
- To be able to live in Herot without fear.
- To get Grendel to come to the hall.

Procedure

Grendel will come to the hall, and everyone will be sleeping except Beowulf. Grendel will open the door, and Beowulf will fight him barehanded and his 14 men will try to help, except that the swords can't hurt Grendel. Beowulf and Grendel will struggle, and Beowulf will rip a piece of Grendel's body off if he wins.

Evaluation/Overview

Grendel came in, and grabbed the King's best friend and Grendel and Beowulf fought in the strudy hall. They struggled, and Beowulf's men tried to help, but it did not work. Beowulf and Grendel continued to fight until Beowulf got Grendel down on the ground, and then he ripped Grendels whole arm off, and showed it to everyone.

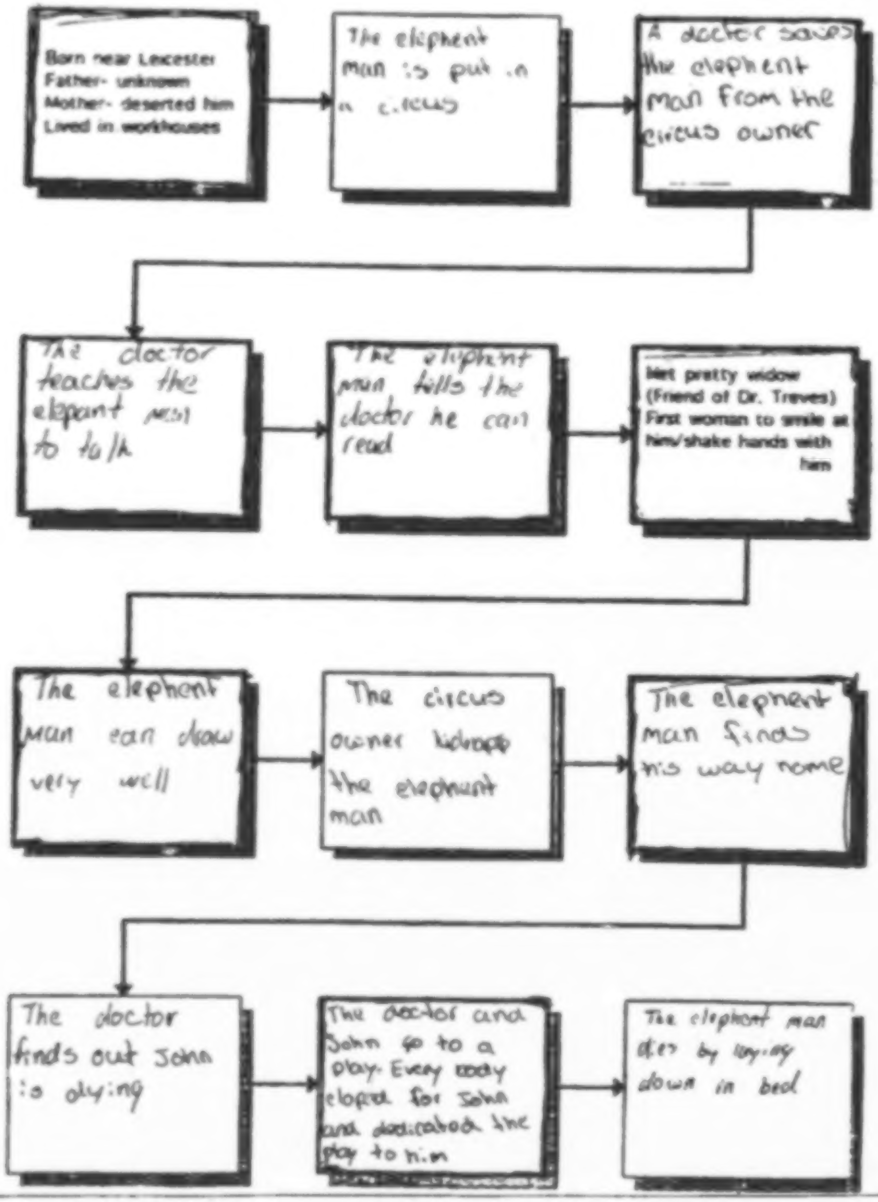
Suggestions and Proposals

If anyone comes back in revenge for Grendel, Beowulf will come back, and he will fight again to protect Herot. We also suggested that Beowulf go to the home of Grendel and swim down in the lake and make sure his mom or anyone does not come back.

Another example of workplace writing was the flow chart. After reading a biography on John Merrick, *Elephant Man*, students were to create a flow chart and use it to plan a presentation. This assignment emphasized story sequence and selecting important details to include in the chart. Figure 2 is an example of a flow chart created by one group of students.

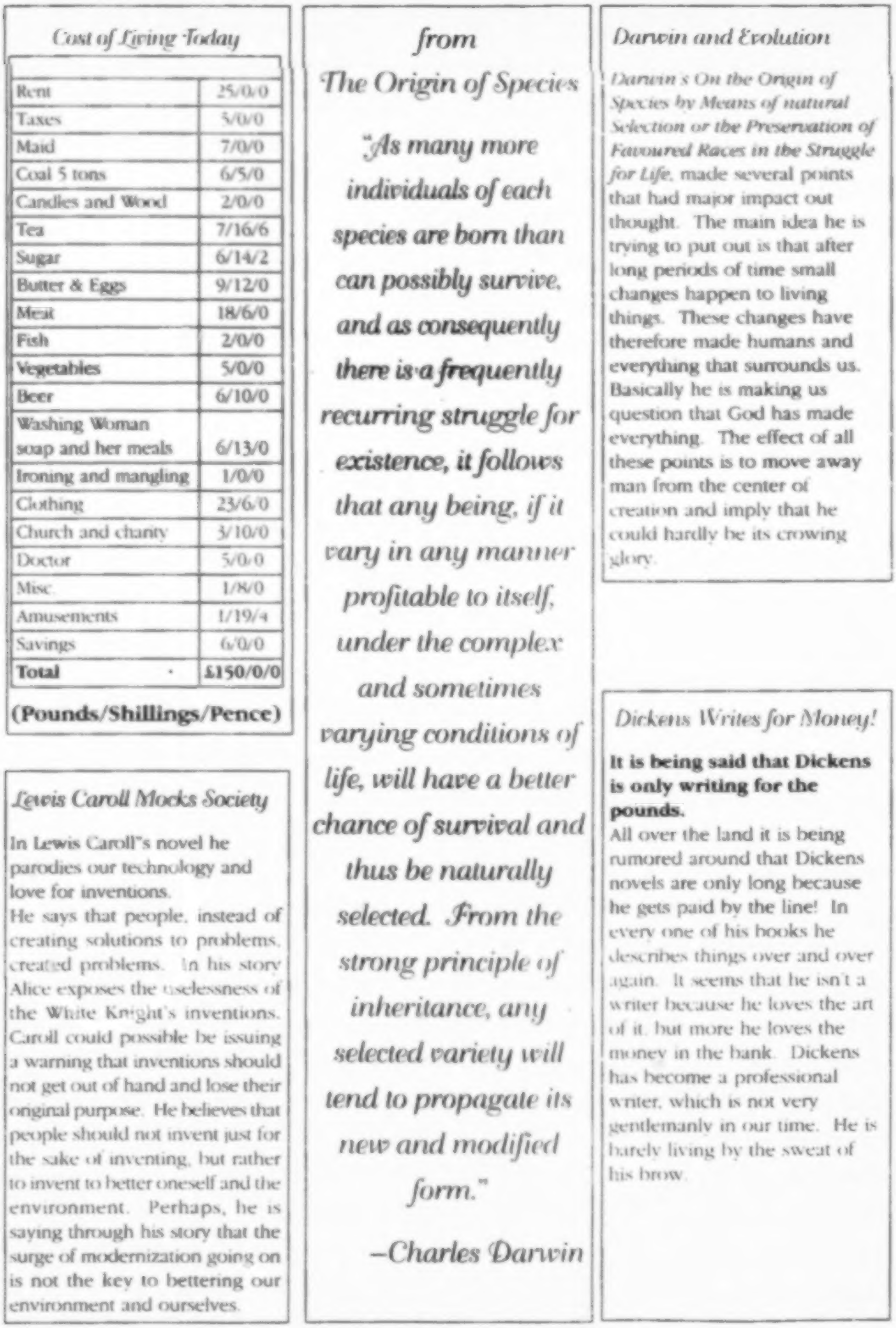
A newsletter format was used for reporting on the major historical periods represented in English literature. In this activity, students worked in groups

Figure 2. Flow Chart of *Elephant Man*


Born near Leicester Father- unknown Mother- deserted him Lived in workhouses
The elephant man is put in a circus
A doctor saves the elephent man from the circus owner
The doctor teaches the elepant man to talk
The elephant man tells the doctor he can read
Met pretty widow (Friend of Dr. Treves) First woman to smile at him/shake hands with him
The elephent man can draw very well
The circus owner kidnaps the elephent man
The elephent man finds his way home
The doctor finds out John is dying
The doctor and John go to a play. Every body clapped for John and dedicated the play to him
The elephant man dies by laying down in bed

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Figure 3. Victorian Era Newsletter



Cost of Living Today

Rent	25/0/0
Taxes	5/0/0
Maid	7/0/0
Coal 5 tons	6/5/0
Candles and Wood	2/0/0
Tea	7/16/6
Sugar	6/14/2
Butter & Eggs	9/12/0
Meat	18/6/0
Fish	2/0/0
Vegetables	5/0/0
Beer	6/10/0
Washing Woman soap and her meals	6/13/0
Ironing and mangling	1/0/0
Clothing	23/6/0
Church and charity	3/10/0
Doctor	5/0/0
Misc	1/8/0
Amusements	1/19/4
Savings	6/0/0
Total	**£150/0/0**

(Pounds/Shillings/Pence)

Lewis Caroll Mocks Society

In Lewis Caroll"s novel he parodies our technology and love for inventions.

He says that people, instead of creating solutions to problems, created problems. In his story Alice exposes the uselessness of the White Knight's inventions. Caroll could possible be issuing a warning that inventions should not get out of hand and lose their original purpose. He believes that people should not invent just for the sake of inventing, but rather to invent to better oneself and the environment. Perhaps, he is saying through his story that the surge of modernization going on is not the key to bettering our environment and ourselves.

from

The Origin of Species

> *"As many more individuals of each species are born than can possibly survive, and as consequently there is a frequently recurring struggle for existence, it follows that any being, if it vary in any manner profitable to itself, under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life, will have a better chance of survival and thus be naturally selected. From the strong principle of inheritance, any selected variety will tend to propagate its new and modified form."*
>
> *–Charles Darwin*

Darwin and Evolution

Darwin's On the Origin of Species by Means of natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life, made several points that had major impact out thought. The main idea he is trying to put out is that after long periods of time small changes happen to living things. These changes have therefore made humans and everything that surrounds us. Basically he is making us question that God has made everything. The effect of all these points is to move away man from the center of creation and imply that he could hardly be its crowing glory.

Dickens Writes for Money!

It is being said that Dickens is only writing for the pounds.

All over the land it is being rumored around that Dickens novels are only long because he gets paid by the line! In every one of his books he describes things over and over again. It seems that he isn't a writer because he loves the art of it, but more he loves the money in the bank. Dickens has become a professional writer, which is not very gentlemanly in our time. He is barely living by the sweat of his brow.

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to research information on the internet and used desktop publishing to produce their newsletter. Figure 3 is an example of a student created newsletter that showed their historical understanding of the Victorian Era beyond rote memorization of historical facts.

Conclusion

As we move through the 21st Century, vast changes in how we educate our students are inevitable. The demand for a highly trained workforce in the United States to compete in the world marketplace will continue. To meet this demand, education must focus on guiding students to become adept in current technology, to acquire complex workplace skills, and to develop the skills necessary to become life-long learners. At the same time, it is important to stress the importance of remaining sensitive to the human condition and for individual growth and understanding. Using literature to develop workplace literacy skills in communication provides an avenue for meeting these challenges in secondary English education.

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COLLEGE STUDENTS' USE OF SELF-SELECTED LEARNING STRATEGIES WHEN INTERACTING WITH EASY AND DIFFICULT TEXT

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Abstract

Fifty students in their junior year of college read two passages, one determined to be easy and the other difficult. Twenty-nine subjects had received no prior instruction on the topics in the texts, and the other 21 had received previous instruction in the topics. Subjects were interrupted four times while reading each text and were asked to state the important information in the segment of the text and indicate the study strategies used while reading the segment. The accuracy of subject recall, their preferences for study strategies, the accuracy of the information stated as important, and the hierarchical level of this information in the texts were all analyzed. Results showed a complex set of relationships among the measurers with both prior knowledge and text difficulty affecting the results.

Most of the research on students' use of study strategies or metacognitive strategies to enable learning from text were conducted about 20 years ago, and most of these focused on the way children in the elementary and middle grades slowly learn how to use these strategies (Baker & Brown, 1984; Anderson & Armbruster, 1984). These studies all found that younger and poorer readers have little metacognitive awareness and often fail to realize when they fail to understand (Garner, 1994; Paris, Waski, & Turner, 1991). There have been very few studies that have focused on the ways that adults use study strategies to enhance learning although Baker (1979) and Baker and Anderson (1982) did find that college students tended to read more slowly and to reread more frequently when anomalous information was embedded in text.

Within the past decade, there have been a few studies that have looked at the way older students' use study strategies, but all of these have focused on students who are experiencing serious difficulties either in high school (Loranger, 1994) or college (Steinberg, 1991). None of these studies focused on average college students, nor did they focus on the way these students used study strategies when reading text that was actually used for courses in the subjects' programs. These are limitations that the current study was designed to overcome.

None of the studies into metacognitive processing or use of study strategies have looked at differences in processing due to text difficulty or to the amount of topic-relevant prior knowledge the subjects bring to the reading task. Both of these variables can be used to predict success in learning from text (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). The current study is designed to look specifically at these two variables.

It is hypothesized that:

1. adult readers who have had prior instruction with text content will recall more information correctly and will use more effective study strategies as they read than will similar readers who have not experienced the text content previously;
2. adult readers will have more problems remembering information from a difficult text than from an easy one regardless of prior knowledge and will be more aware of using study strategies when reading the difficult text because they will have to use fix-up strategies more frequently.

Method

Materials

Two passages were abstracted from a book the researcher has written for a course in language and literacy development. Both passages contained information about the nature of language. The first one dealt briefly with the development of the English language over the past 1000 years and contained brief examples of both Old and Middle English texts. The second described the six areas studied by linguists and the arbitrary relationship between language structure and function.

Both texts were revised slightly so that length and readability could be controlled. Thus number of words (556 for one text and 558 for the other) was made as equivalent as possible as was readability (college level for both). Table 1 shows the specifics of the control of the surface variables of the text.

The two texts differed greatly in the amount of important (high-level) information each contained, as can also be seen in Table 1. The text dealing with the evolution of the English language (hereafter referred to as the easy

Table 1. Descriptive Information About Texts

Text Features	Easy Text	Hard Text
# of words	556	558
# of sentences	33	33
# of syllables	892	899
Levels of Concepts		
# concepts in topic	1	2
# level 1 concepts	3	7
# level 2 concepts	3	9
# level 3 concepts	3	9
# level 4-6 concepts	12	0
total # of concepts	22	27

text) contained only one topic and three major subtopics. It was considered easy because there were only three major concepts to understand about the topic. The text dealing with language form and function (hereafter referred to as the hard text), on the other hand, contained two topics and seven major subtopics. This required subjects to relate information to the correct topic and to keep all seven major concepts that related to these topics clearly in mind.

Both texts contained an introduction and three major subheadings. Thus each text had four natural breaks. Each text was interrupted at the end of each of these breaks so that subjects could record reflections about the information they encountered and their reading strategies.

Subjects

The subjects were college juniors all of whom were enrolled in an elementary education program in a large, urban university in the southeast. Subjects had an average age of 24. Eight of the 50 subjects were males, and the remaining 42 were females. The majority of subjects were Hispanic. About half of the Hispanic population were native speakers of English, and the other half were native speakers of Spanish. All were fluent in English.

The subjects were either in the first or the second semester of a carefully-sequenced program of studies. Those in the second semester of the program were part way through the course in which the text from which the passages were derived is used and the topics included in the research passages were discussed extensively in class. (These subjects are referred to hereafter as the high prior knowledge (high pk) subjects.) There were 21 students from this class who participated as subjects in the study. The subjects in the first semester of the program (hereafter referred to as the low prior knowledge (low pk) subjects) had not yet encountered any of the text or the information contained within it as part of their program of studies. There were 29 students from this class who participated in the study.

Procedures

Each subject received a booklet containing the two passages (counterbalanced so that no practice effect could confound the results), a set of ten questions about the subjects' background, reading habits, and study strategies, and two sets of ten open-ended questions, one per text. The order of the two passages was varied with 50% of the packets beginning with the easier text and followed by the harder text and the other 50% with the passages in the reverse order. Packets were then distributed to subjects in random order. In this way any practice effect was distributed equally across both passages.

Subjects were told in the written directions to read the passages just the way they would if they knew they were to be quizzed on the material in the next class. They were further informed that they would have to answer questions about the passages at the end of the experiment. They were also informed that their reading would be interrupted four times for each text so that they could stop and think about what they had read and about the strategies they used while reading. They were permitted to read at their own pace.

At each of the natural breaks in the passages (four times per passage), subjects were asked to stop and identify the most important information to remember from the segment of text and to indicate the strategies they used while reading. They could select from six listed study strategies or could indicate that they used some other technique. The six listed study strategies were: (a) reread parts of the text, (b) underline important information, (c) ask self questions about what was read, (d) relate the information from the text to prior knowledge, (e) take notes while reading, and (f) just keep on reading. Subjects were permitted to select as many of these as were relevant.

When subjects completed reading the two texts, they went on to answer the ten questions about their background and reading habits. These questions provided the researcher with information about the subjects, but it also worked as an interpolation task so that the subjects could not rely on short-term memory when answering the questions that followed. They then were told to answer the questions on the following pages without looking back at the passages they had read. They wrote answers to short, open-ended questions about the texts. The questions were presented in the order that the texts were read. The questions for each text required subjects to understand the topic, the major subtopics, and details from the various levels of the text. When the subjects completed the last of the questions, they returned their booklets to the researcher.

Scoring

Recall Data. The data produced by the responses to the open-ended questions was scored as correct, partially correct (correct but incomplete), or incorrect (completely wrong or no answer written). These categories were then converted into numerical scores:

1 point for each correct answer,
1/2 point for each partial answer,
0 points for each wrong answer,
and the points were summed for each of the two passages.

Self-Report Data. The data produced when the subjects reflected after each break in the passage was also scored. First, the study strategies reported by the subjects were tablulated, and the frequency of each strategy selected was computed. Then the information the subjects selected as the most important to remember from the segment of the text was scored for accuracy and for the level in the text hierarchy from which it was derived. Accuracy was defined just as it was for the recall data. Frequencies for each category of data were computed.

To determine the level of the information selected as important to re-

Figure 1. Hierarchical Structure of Easy Text

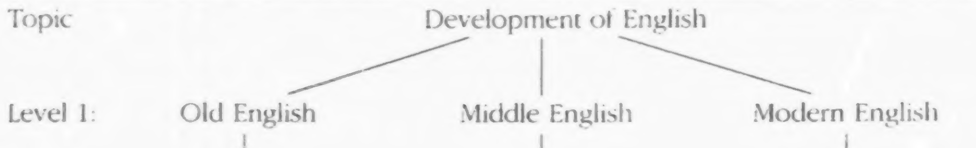
Topic
Development of English
Level 1:
Old English
Middle English
Modern English
Level 2:
Germanic language
French introduced by William I
oral language changed
Level 3:
Angles, Saxons, Jutes
language of upper class
began in early 1500's
Level 4:
language named for Angles
1400's, languages merged —> Middle
Shakespeare's language
Level 5:
Beowulf
Canterbury Tales
printing press
vocab changed most
structure changed least
Level 6:
Old E ≠ Mod E
more like Mod Eng
written conventions established
continues to change

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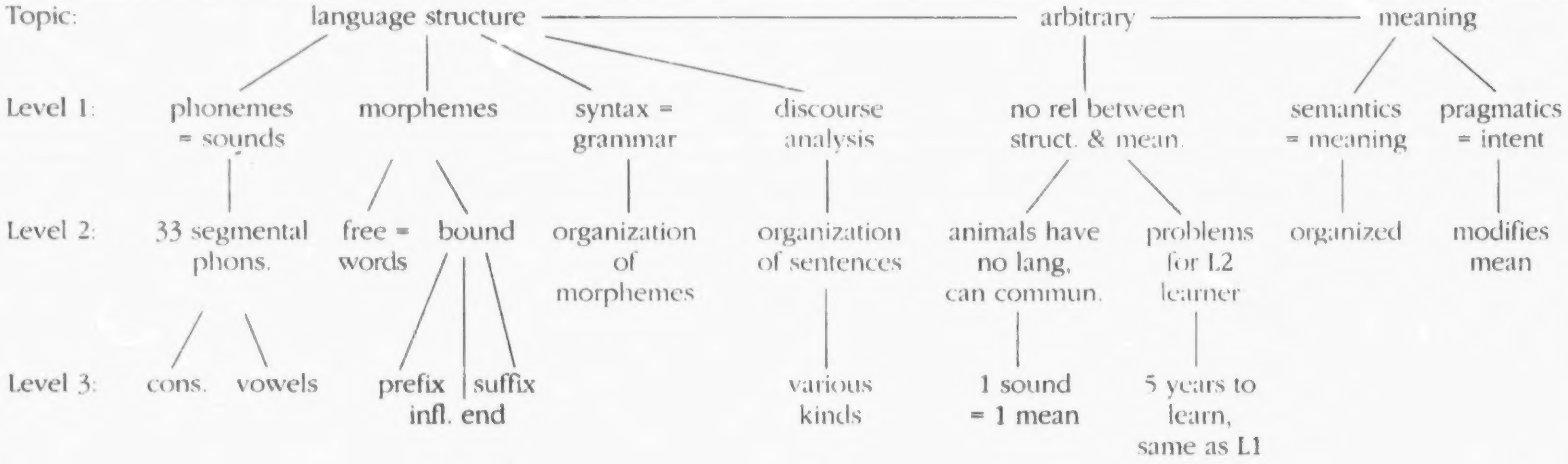
Figure 2. Hierarchical Structure of Hard Text


Topic:
language structure
arbitrary
meaning
Level 1:
phonemes = sounds
morphemes
syntax = grammar
discourse analysis
no rel between struct. & mean.
semantics = meaning
pragmatics = intent
Level 2:
33 segmental phons.
free = words
bound
organization of morphemes
organization of sentences
animals have no lang, can commun.
problems for L2 learner
organized
modifies mean
Level 3:
cons.
vowels
prefix
suffix
infl. end
various kinds
1 sound = 1 mean
5 years to learn, same as L1

member, the stated information was compared to the hierarchical structure of each of the texts. These are shown in Figures 1 and 2. If statements contained information from more than one level of the hierarchy, they were scored as relating to the highest level included in the statement.

Results

Recall Data

The total scores each subject earned when answering the open-ended questions were compared using two-way analysis of variance with interactions in order to discover whether the differences in prior knowledge and the differences in text difficulty had any effect on the amount and accuracy of recall. As can be seen in Table 2, the data show that, while none of the treatment groups showed a high level of recall, there were significant differences in the scores received based on the amount of prior knowledge the subjects brought to the task with high PK subjects receiving a means score of 6.15 and low PK subjects a mean score of 4.69, ($f_{49.1} = 6.93$, $p<.025$). Further, all the subjects recalled more information from the easy text ($\bar{X} = 5.79$) than the difficult text ($\bar{X} = 3.53$), ($f_{49.1} = 38.52$, $p < .001$). There were no statistically significant interactions.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations for Recall of Text by Subject and Text Variables

SUBJECT VARIABLES			TEXT VARIABLES	
			EASY	HARD
low pk	n = 29	mean standard deviation	5.28 (1.82)	3.09 (1.62)
high pk	n = 21	mean standard deviation	6.31 (2.03)	3.98 (1.85)

subject differences $F_{49.1} = 6.9305$ $p < .025$
text differences $F_{49.1} = 38.5196$ $p < .001$
interactions $F_{49.1} = 0.3020$

Self-Reported Data

Selection of Study Strategies. The frequency with which each of the study strategies were selected as being used was analyzed for statistical significance using multiple chi-square procedures. As Table 3 shows, there were statistically significant differences for the selection study strategies regardless of treatment as well as for each of the treatment groups ($\chi^2_{5.3} = 24.93$, $p < .05$). These data also show that low pk subjects, regardless of text read, tend to

Table 3. Frequency of Selection of Study Strategies by Subject and Text Variables

Subjects	Text Difficulty	Reread	Uline	Ask ?	Pk	Notes	Read	χ^2
low pk (29)	easy	54	16	57	18	23	41	48.14****
	hard	44	19	56	29	16	50	30.15****
high pk (21)	easy	29	14	51	28	19	30	28.45****
	hard	31	15	50	36	15	20	34.50****
χ^2		10.52 ***	0.92	0.62	5.97 **	2.14	14.49 ****	24.93*

$^{*}p < .05$ $^{**}p > .025$ $^{***}p < .005$ $^{****}p < .001$

reread, ask questions of self, and just keep reading ($\chi^2_{1,5} = 48.14$, $p < .001$ for the easy text and 39.15, $p < .001$ for the hard text) while high pk subjects, regardless of text read, tended to use self-questioning the most ($\chi^2_{1,5} = 28.45$, $p < .001$ for the easy text and 34.50, $p < .001$ for the hard text). They also show that the subjects, regardless of prior knowledge and of text, seldom underlined or made any notes. As expected, subjects with high prior knowledge tended to relate text content to their prior knowledge more often than those with low prior knowledge ($\chi^2_{1,3} = 5.97$, $p < .05$)

There are no clear differences in the selection of study strategies based on the difficulty of the text only. However, high pk subjects, when reading the hard text tended to just keep reading less often than when reading the easy text or when compared to the strategies selected by the low pk subjects ($\chi^2_{1,3} = 14.49$, $p < .005$).

Accuracy of information selected as important. The information selected as the most important to remember from each text segment was analyzed with multiple chi-square procedures.

Table 4. Accuracy of Information Selected as Important to Remember Shown in Frequencies by Subject and Text Variables

Subjects	Text Difficulty	Accuracy			χ^2
		Correct	Partial	Wrong	
low pk (29)	easy	16	99	1	143.68***
	hard	31	75	10	74.44***
high pk (21)	easy	23	60	1	62.51***
	hard	24	61	1	35.69***
χ^2		4.82*	26.43**	18.77**	24.07*

$^{*}p < .05$ $^{**}p < .005$ $^{***}p < .001$

As seen in Table 4, these data show an overall difference in accuracy regardless of treatment; all subjects tended to write down as most important to remember partially-correct information ($\chi^2_{2,3}$ = 24.07, $p < .05$). In addition, the subjects with low prior knowledge were less likely to create completely correct statements when reading the easy text ($\chi^2_{1,3}$ = 4.82, $p < .05$) and were more likely to select inappropriate information as important when reading the difficulty text ($\chi^2_{1,3}$ = 18.77, $p < .005$). There were no differences due solely to text difficulty, and the only difference due solely to prior knowledge was the much higher frequency of partially-correct statements from the low pk group regardless of text ($\chi^2_{1,3}$ = 26.43, $p < .005$)

Hierarchical levels of text. The data for the hierarchical level of the information selected as important to remember were analyzed using multiple chi-square procedures. As seen in Table 5, statistical comparisons were made only for the first three levels in the hierarchy since the difficulty text only had three levels, and it was inappropriate to inflate differences because of this difference. The data do show a statistically significant difference in the hierarchical level selected regardless of treatment ($\chi^2_{2,3}$ = 83.43, $p < .005$). However, it is the individual treatment differences that produce the more insightful differences. The information selected as important from the difficult text tended to be from the highest level in the hierarchy ($\chi^2_{1,3}$ = 71.09, $p < .001$) while the information from the easy text tended to be taken as often from the lower three levels of the hierarchy as from the higher. This occurred regardless of prior knowledge of the subjects.

Table 5. Frequency of Hierarchical Levels of Information Selected as Important by Subjects and Text Variables

(between subject and between text statistical analysis conducted for levels 1-3 only)

SUBJECTS	TEXT DIFFICULTY	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	χ^2
low pk (29)	easy	7	22	6	13	24	9	22.22**
	hard	63	11	6	0	0	0	70.72**
high pk (21)	easy	10	19	4	11	12	8	11.39**
	hard	44	18	4	0	0	0	40.85**
χ^2		71.90**	3.76	4.17				83.43**

*p < .005 **p < .001

Relationships Among Self-Selected and Recall Data

To ascertain the degree of relationship that existed between the amount of information recalled and each of the three self-selected measures (strategies selected, accuracy of the information selected as important, and the hierarchical level of the information selected as important), three separate computations of correlation were computed. None of the three correlations showed any relationship between the self-selected variables and the accuracy of recalled information. The correlation between study strategies selected and accuracy of recall was very close to zero ($r_{48} = .0008$). The correlation between the accuracy of the information selected and the accuracy of recall was equally minimal ($r_{48} = .0027$). The correlation between the hierarchical level of the information selected and the accuracy of recall was also close to zero ($r_{48} = -.0079$). In all three cases, data collected during reading could not be used to predict accuracy of recall after reading.

Discussion

The primary purpose for this study was to investigate the subjects' use of varying study strategies when reading difficult or easy text and the effects of the subjects' prior knowledge on the use of these study strategies. The results show that both subjects who had encountered the information previously and those who had not tended to ask themselves questions about what they were reading more than any other study strategy. However, there were also differences due to the amount of prior knowledge the subjects had. The subjects with minimal prior knowledge of the topics tended to select rereading or just continuing to read as preferred study strategies while those with some prior knowledge of the topics used these strategies less often. Further, subjects with some prior knowledge tended to use this prior knowledge to make sense of both texts. These patterns occurred regardless of the difficulty of the text.

These results show that subject prior knowledge can contribute to the selection of study strategies. When the subjects lacked prior knowledge of passage content, they seemed to fall back on study strategies that are indicative of minimal metacognitive monitoring (Paris, Waski, & Turner, 1991) such as continuing to read or those that are indicative of metacognitive monitoring without the use of effective fix-up strategies (Baker & Anderson, 1982). It should be noted however, that both groups of subjects used these strategies more often than note taking, the one strategy proven to lead to successful learning in previous research (Anderson & Armbruster, 1984) because it demonstrates active interaction with the text rather than passive attempts to absorb information.

The only difference in the selection of study strategies that could be attributed to differences in text difficulty occurred for the low pk subjects. They reported less use of prior knowledge when reading the easy text than when reading the hard text. It is possible that when readers who lack relevant prior knowledge encounter relatively easy text, they do not feel the lack of prior knowledge as much as when reading difficult text. Thus they would just continue to read and ask themselves questions in the hopes that the text would make sense by the time they finish reading. Alternatively, the readers may have found some of the information in the difficult text relevant to their past experiences. This interpretation calls into question the accuracy of subjects' self-perception.

The data about the accuracy and hierarchical level of the information the subjects selected as important to remember were included in this study to provide support for the study strategies selected. That is, the selection of important information was expected to be more complete and accurate when effective study strategies were selected. However, because the subjects tended to select study strategies that were less likely to be effective, the data from the information selected could not be used to explore this connection. However, these data did show some differences attributable to text difficulty and the amount of prior knowledge the subjects brought to the task. All the subjects, regardless of the text or subject differences tended to select correct but incomplete information as the most important to remember. These data indicate that all the subjects were able to learn from the texts but that learning was insufficiently detailed regardless of the amount of previous experience with the information.

This is further supported by the attraction the subjects had to the seductive details (information that was concrete but lower in the text hierarchy) of both passages. This information may have been selected as important just because it was more concrete than information higher in the hierarchy showing that the subjects selected as important the information they tended to understand most easily. On the other hand, the alterative details in both passages may have related to the previous experience more than the higher-level information did. For instance, all but two subjects mentioned Shakespeare as important information when reading the easy passage, and all but four mentioned the relationship between first and second-language learning as important in the difficult text. There is a third reason for the attraction of lower-level information. It may have been a function of the ways the specific texts were written. The easy text turned out to have two macrostructures, one topical and one sequential. The topical information was at the top of the hierarchy of the text while the sequential information was found in the lower levels. Thus it is possible that the subjects found the information important as it related to the sequential structure. This interpretation gains support when one takes into consideration the clear preference for both groups for the top-level information in the difficulty text, a text with only one macrostructure. Further research needs to be conducted on the effect of text organization on the decisions readers make while reading to clarify this point.

Overall, the selection of information as important to remember showed a wide variety of selections from both groups of subjects. Subjects with relevant prior knowledge tended to produce accurate statements more often and to be less attracted to the seductive details than those without relevant prior knowledge. Those with less prior knowledge were more likely to misinterpret the difficult passage, perhaps in order to make the text more consistent with prior understanding. In order to determine the actual thinking the subjects engaged in, additional research in which subjects are interviewed several times during the reading process is needed.

In addition to the study of the self-selection strategies, the study also focused on the subjects memory for the information in each text in the hopes that there might be a connection between study strategies and/or the selection of important information and the actual information recalled. No such relationships were discovered. However, there were differences due to both text difficulty and subject prior knowledge that affected the completeness and accuracy of the information recalled from the text. The easy text was remembered in more detail, and the subjects with relevant prior knowledge recalled more correct information from both texts.

The lack of relationships between the information produced during reading and that produced after reading seems counterintuitive until one remembers that self-report data is always incomplete because much metacognitive monitoring occurs at a subconscious level. It was hoped that this problem would not occur when asking subjects to specify the important information to be remembered, but that did not occur.

Taken as a whole, this study has shown that text difficulty and the presence or absence of prior knowledge do affect both the amount and accuracy of the information recalled from text and the way the subjects think while reading. Further, the study has shown that there is much than can be learned when looking at the study strategies of successful college students because these students still make poor choices of study strategies and are still attracted to seductive details rather than to major concepts. Spiro, Coulson, Feltovick, and Anderson (1994) discuss this effect as a phenomenon of trying to learn conceptually complicated information such as learning in a medical school program. According to Spiro et al, learners in this situation tend to oversimplify information, to overrely on one way of thinking about the information, to overrely on a top-down approach, to learn information without reference to context, to overrely on existing schemata, to compartmentalize information rigidly, and to absorb information passively. The current study has found evidence for all of these. Subjects oversimplified information as shown by their tendency to produce correct but incomplete answers to the follow-up questions. Subjects also simplified the organization of the texts by relying on a single organization of the easy text to direct their selection of important information. Further, there was evidence to support top-down processing, the reliance on prior knowledge of insignificant details to direct their learning. As Hidi, Baird, and Hildyard (1982) have shown, learners often identify as important to learn the information they find personally interesting. This can result in the production of meaning that neither authors nor teachers anticipate.

Like all research, this study has its limitations. First, data interpretation is based on assumptions about the relationship between the written products and the mental processes readers use to produce these products. The only way to overcome this limitation is to ask subjects to engage in think-alouds. However, think-alouds do not parallel normal reading procedures, so there are problems with this kind of data as well. Second, the assumption that previous experience with the content of the passages would provide sufficient prior knowledge to produce totally different results was not validated. Rather, the data raise questions about the nature of prior knowledge and about the amount of experience learners need before they can gain the information from a book that authors and teachers expect. Finally, the study was not timed. This caused the loss of statistical data to support the observation of the researcher that subjects with prior knowledge took longer to engage in the research tasks. A replication of the study with time on task as a variable is currently being conducted.

Even with these limitations, the study has shed light on the way that successful college students process information similar to that used in course instruction. Those teaching in higher education need to realize that students use strategies as they read, but they often fail to learn expected information due to the complexity of the domain of knowledge. Further, it is important for researchers to realize that even very proficient readers struggle when reading complex content. Continued research into the ways that college students try to learn from text and how these might differ from the kinds of learning college instructors hope will occur needs to be conducted. The research community needs to keep exploring these issues. After all, if we are going to improve instruction, we need to know how to help students learn effectively. According to the current study, effective learning was not accomplished; not a single subject selected only correct information to remember, and not a single subject reached an 80% correct score on the recall measures.

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THE INFLUENCE OF A PROCESS APPROACH TO WRITING INSTRUCTION, INCLUDING AUDIENCE SPECIFICATIONS, ON THE WRITING DEVELOPMENT OF A SECOND-GRADE STUDENT: THE STORY OF SAMUEL

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Abstract

This case study is a small piece of a larger study. The purpose of this investigation was to provide descriptive data from a classroom study concerning the influence of audience on the composition of texts in different genres in response to both generative and reconstructive writing assignments. The teacher was a constructivist and used the process approach to writing instruction.

The story of Samuel is about the importance of audience to the writing development of this struggling reader. The attention and feedback that Samuel received from various audiences throughout the school year as he presented his texts provided the reassurance that he needed to improve as a writer. Audience provided the purpose Samuel needed to encourage him to engage in the difficult task of writing.

Theoretical Framework

Recent research provides support for an audience-awareness approach to writing instruction. According to The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Writing Report Card (1992), the most successful writers not only had written more frequently but also were encouraged to write for more varied audiences and purposes. McAlexander (1996) pointed out that one of the most important aspects of good writing is a concern for readers' reactions, and good writing instruction should focus on techniques to strengthen audience awareness.

In today's American schools, with the influence of the constructivist philosophy (Fosnot, 1996) and the arrival of the process approach to writing instruction (Graves, 1983), there is a rediscovery of the importance of audience specifications to writing assignments. The process approach to writing instruction promotes the idea of a community of learners, children working together, listening to each other and peer editing of written drafts. This approach provides peers as the first audience, rather than the teacher relating as an assessment audience. As writers engage in meaningful communication with real readers, many classrooms have become places where students write for authentic reasons and serve as active audiences for each other. Calkins (1994), Graves (1983) and Atwell (1987) all recommend an audience-awareness approach to the teaching of writing, whereby children share texts with each other. This approach ensures that students' writing has a varied readership and helps them attend to audience concerns while they compose and revise. As Calkins puts it, "A sense of authorship comes from the struggle to put something big and vital into print and from seeing one's own printed words reach the hearts and minds of readers" (p. 9).

For most students the first audience they seek to please is the teacher who grades the writing assignment. When children only read and write in a context of tight teacher specifications, however, there is little opportunity for them to develop a rich, varied and functional sense of audience. Daniels (1990) recommended: ". . . the use of classmates as audiences needs to be further developed; and more opportunities need to be provided for publishing student work, reaching for readers around the school, back to home, and out into the community" (p. 108).

With the rekindled interest in sense of audience and its importance to the teaching of writing, a great deal of research is being generated on the topic of audience. Most of this research is being conducted with older students and more advanced writers. In addition, research has yet to focus on the effect of audience awareness on children's use of genre as they compose texts. There is a need for descriptive research conducted in real classrooms concerning an audience-awareness approach to writing instruction with primary grade children.

Rationale

The research presented in this article is part of a larger study. This yearlong study used a qualitative case study research design. As a teacher-researcher, my goal was to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of this group of second-grade students' construction of texts in three genres for different audiences. The students constructed fiction, nonfiction and hybrid texts for peers, kindergarten children and parents. Hybrid genre combines information and story in one text. According to Littlefair (1992), the gray or hybrid genre was developed to provide a meaningful context to present facts to young children. Fictional characters in story format present facts.

Throughout the course of this study I used the process approach to writing based on a constructivist philosophy of instruction. Natural process instruction is the most popular current trend in writing instruction. This approach recognizes the many kinds of activities writers may engage in, including, steps of pre-writing activities, drafting, conferring and revising which lead to a completed text. The constructivist philosophy of instruction supports children as active learners. Learning is a generative, meaning-making activity that the students themselves must carry out. The teacher's role, then, is not to dispense knowledge but to provide students the opportunities to build their own knowledge (Fosnot, 1996). Allowing children to choose topics based on their own interests is in tune with the process approach to writing instruction as well as with the constructivist philosophy of instruction. Clay (1979) referred to this type of writing as "creative writing." She emphasized the importance of this kind of writing to early reading success. As children put their ideas and messages into print, they learn a lot about the constraints and directionality of our language as letters turn into words, and words turn into different kinds of sentences. Certainly as children choose their own topics and audience, they become empowered as active participants in their writing development. Routman (2000) emphasized that even the quality of young writers' texts is impacted when they write for an audience that matters to them. A sense of audience adds purpose to their writing.

The students in this classroom were given time to write and share their writing daily. This writing period followed the format of writers workshop explained by Calkins (1994), beginning with a mini-lesson focused on direct instruction of writing conventions and the different purposes for writing that determine genre. Cunningham and Allington (1999) pointed out the importance of providing children time to write and the demonstration of the process and importance of writing to them. They stressed that writing is thinking, and because thinking is learning, children who write while they are learning think more and therefore learn more. They also confirmed the importance of children learning to write for many purposes. Full literacy development requires the ability to write reports as well as stories.

To gain an understanding of the influence of audience on the writing of these second-grade students, data were collected from a variety of sources throughout the school year. These sources included students' texts, oral conferences, audio and videotapes, and documents. The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis presented by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was used to analyze the data. Conceptual categories emerged from the examination and comparison of data. Data collection and analysis were validated in this study by triangulating data sources and methods.

In an effort to add structure to this study, I organized the research plan into three phases: Phase One, Building a Community of Writers; Phase Two, Ongoing Classroom Activities; and Phase Three, Final Writing Activities and Collection of Data. All of the students in this second-grade class were selected to be the informants in this study, but during phase two, several students were selected as informants for in-depth investigation. Samuel was one of the students chosen for detailed examination.

In this article I will present one case study from this second-grade class. First I will describe a brief history of Samuel's literacy development prior to second grade. Next I will provide a description of Samuel's writing competency at the beginning of the study. We will look at his writing development over the year and the connection between this development and the budding awareness of audience evident in this young writer's texts. Finally I will discuss the implications for writing instruction in primary classrooms based on the findings from this case study.

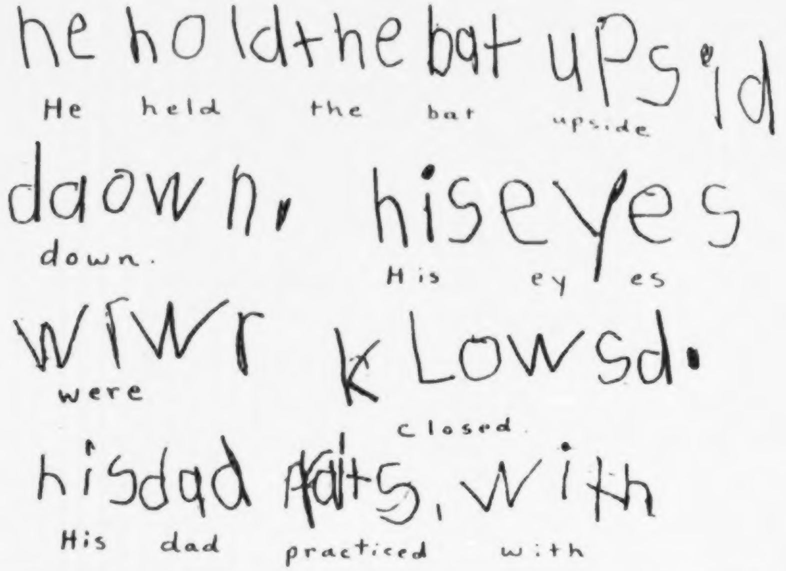
Samuel

Samuel was a year older than most of the children in this class, because he attended junior first one year between kindergarten and first grade. He lived with his biological parents and was an only child. They were a lower level economic family. His father was a high school graduate, but mother never completed high school. Samuel lacked many social and cultural experiences, but he had a wonderful curiosity and desire to learn about the world around him. While Samuel was very boisterous and often had difficulty waiting for his turn to be heard, his classmates and teacher appreciated his kind, unselfish nature.

Literacy learning was difficult for Samuel. Reading and writing were not a priority at home, and his parents were very hard on him concerning his difficulty with learning to read. Samuel was often punished for lack of achievement or behavior problems. Thus, he did not have good self-esteem or confidence in his literacy abilities. He cried easily and quickly became frustrated which resulted in a lack of initiative.

Samuel's speech development was delayed, and he received speech therapy. In kindergarten he placed in the fifth percentile with a stanine of 2 on a prereading achievement test. However, at the end of his year in junior first, he improved these scores to place in the sixty-seventh percentile with a stanine of 6 on the same test. In first grade, Samuel began the year with satisfactory achievement in reading and writing, but by second semester he struggled to keep up with classmates. Twice during this time period, the family

Figure 1. Samuel's first written retelling.



he holdthe bat upsid
He held the bat upside

daown. hiseyes
down. His eyes

wrwr kLowsd.
were closed.

hisdad Pats, with
His dad practiced with

dog bit Samuel in the face. The second incident was severe enough to keep him out of school for an extended time. He was in the middle of Reading Recovery intervention before his injury, but since it was late in the school year he never completed the program. He entered second grade reading at a beginning first grade level.

Even at the beginning of the school year I soon noticed that although Samuel's writing competency was immature, there was often evidence of interesting decision-making during his writing process. Sometimes there was unusual evidence of audience awareness in his writing, but other times there was evidence of no audience awareness in his responses and construction of texts. However, this lack of consistency was evident in other children's writing as well.

During the first week of school, a mini-lesson that preceded writers' workshop focused on written retellings. I read *The Mitten* by Jan Brett and explained that the author had written a retelling of an old Ukrainian folk tale. The mini-lesson concluded with this writing prompt: "We just finished reading *Ronald Morgan Goes to Bat* by Patricia Reilly Giff. I want you to do a written retelling of this story, and we will read them to partners later." (First audience cue: classmates) Figure 1 is Samuel's first written retelling. While he was able to compose three ideas from the story, it demonstrates his immature writing competency. This reconstructive writing task was very difficult for Samuel, and he quit writing in the middle of a sentence. Samuel was eight years and one month old when he constructed this text.

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As noted before, in spite of Samuel's difficulty with literacy tasks, there was evidence of interesting decision-making during his writing process. This evidence appeared early in the school year and continued throughout the course of this study. In December one mini-lesson that preceded writers' workshop focused on developing purpose with respect to a particular audience. This was a generative task, and parents were the assigned audience. To complete the assignment, the students had to compose a persuasive text, which requires a high level of cognitive ability. According to the NAEP Writing Report Card (1992), even writers at the high school level struggled with the composition of effective persuasive texts.

This writing prompt was given at the beginning of writers' workshop: "Today your writing should be directed to your parents. I want you to explain to them what you want for Christmas and what you would like your family to do on Christmas day. You need to convince your parents that you deserve these gifts and that your plan for this holiday is a great one."

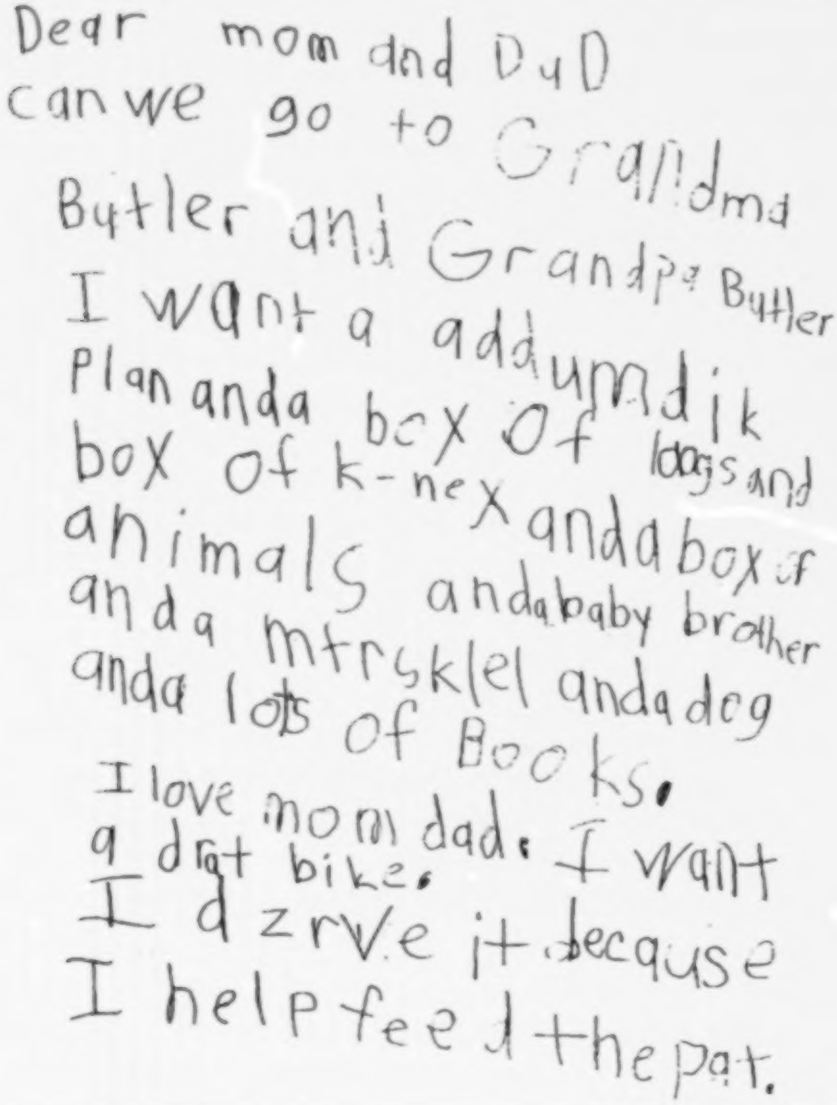
Most of the children only listed their wishes but were not able to offer any persuasive argument to convince their parents that they deserved to have their requests fulfilled. Samuel not only stated his wishes but also supported them with a convincing rationale. In Figure 2, notice his improved writing from August to December. Samuel understood the purpose for this text and presented a persuasive rationale to support his wishes.

Sometimes Samuel's responses and texts revealed undeniable evidence of his awareness of audience. After constructing a nonfiction text for a kindergarten audience Samuel said he colored the pictures so they could understand them. During an interview about the same text, I posed this hypothetical question: "Would you have done anything different for another audience, like let's say you were writing it for your mom and dad, would you have done anything different?" Samuel responded, "I'd put in some cursive words or something like that, because they can read cursive and other kinds."

During the final phase of the study, when given an assignment to write a fiction text for his parents, Samuel composed a text entitled, *The Shark's Adventure*. The following is an excerpt of an interview about the text:

T: Do you remember who your audience is for your book?
S: My mom and dad.
T: When you wrote this book did you do anything special for them?
S: Yeah, I did some special stuff for them. Since my mom likes Jaws III, I figured she would like the biggest shark in the ocean. So I drew a shark whale.
T: What about dad? Why is dad going to like this book?
S: Because he likes boats and stuff like that.
T: Is that the reason you put sharks and boats in the story?
S: Yeah, they're gonna love it.

Figure 2. Samuel's persuasive text written for his parent audience.



Dear mom and DuD
can we go to Grandma
Butler and Grandpa Butler
I want a addumdik
Plan anda box Of logs and
box of k-nex anda box of
animals andababy brother
anda mtrsklel andadog
anda lots of Books.
I love mom dad. I want
a drat bike.
I dzrve it becquse
I help feed the pat.

Samuel chose his topic, or purpose for writing to please and entertain his audience. This was the first evidence that perhaps audience can determine the purpose or topic of a text.

After the first draft was completed for this assignment, I instructed the students to now pretend the text was for a different audience, kindergarten students. I instructed them to reread their texts, keeping the new audience in mind, and make any necessary changes in their writing to meet the needs of these younger children. Samuel made one change to accommodate the new audience. He changed the shark's name. The following is part of an

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interview about this revision:

T: Did you make any changes for the kindergarten audience?
S: Yeah, his name was Waghso and I changed it to Max.
T: Why did you make that change?
S: Because if the kindergartners didn't like Waghso, I figured they'd like Max, because Max is easier to write and isn't so hard for them.

Samuel did not make a lot of adjustments in his texts to accommodate specific audiences. However, the adjustments he made were very well planned and original.

Samuel, like some of the other children in this class, fluctuated often in the ability to adjust texts for contrasting audiences. They were young writers just being introduced to process writing. Developmentally, they were entering the Piagetian concrete cognitive stage but often reverted back to egocentric thinking associated with the Piagetian pre-operational cognitive stage of development.

Midway through the school year, Samuel's developing sense of audience was not consistent. This was typical of many of his classmates. The assigned audience for a text about crickets was the kindergartners. After Samuel had constructed this nonfiction text, I interviewed him. The following is an excerpt from this session:

T: When you were writing this book, who were you writing it for . . . whom did you wish to read it?
S: Everybody in the world.
T: Do you know what audience means?
S: Yeah. It's where people listen to you.
T: Good. Who listened to us?
S: The kindergartners.
T: While you were writing this book then, did you do anything to make it easier for the kindergarten kids to understand?
S: They mostly know my work.
T: They know your work? How?
S: Because I've been in their class and they've seen our class.
T: Okay, but as you were writing your book, did you do anything to make your words or pictures easier for them to understand?
S: I colored the pictures so they could understand them.
T: Would you have done anything different for another audience, like let's say you were writing it for your mom and dad, would you have done anything different?
S: I'd put some cursive words in or something like that, because they can read cursive and other kinds.

Samuel understood the definition of audience and could talk about possible adaptations for a given audience, but did not yet incorporate these adaptations into his texts.

As the children were exposed to quality children's literature, they became familiar with different parts of a book. Soon they began to imitate and include components of published books in their texts. They enjoyed writing a dedication for their texts as well as a section about the author. Samuel, like many of the children, confused the dedication recipient with their audience. Figure 3 is the cover he created for his cricket book. Again, this global dedication confirmed Samuel's uncertainty regarding audience awareness.

As Samuel became more aware of the audiences for his texts, the quality of voice improved in his writing. Samuel's endearing personality became apparent in his texts. His voice became an interesting characteristic of his texts as he spoke directly to his intended audience in his writing. Figures 4 and 5 are examples of this quality of voice. As Samuel expressed his feelings in this text, his distinctive voice could be heard.

Figure 3. Cover for cricket book, demonstrating lack of audience awareness.

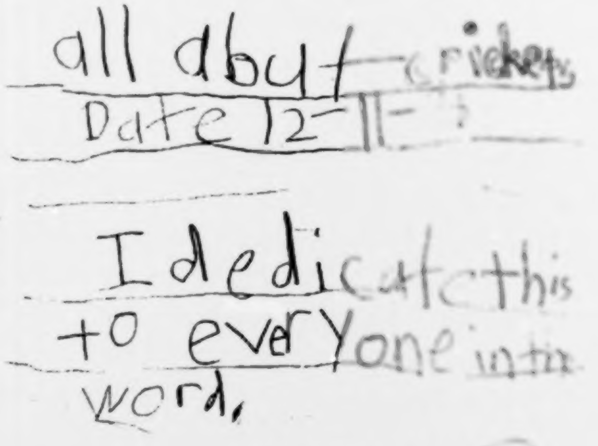

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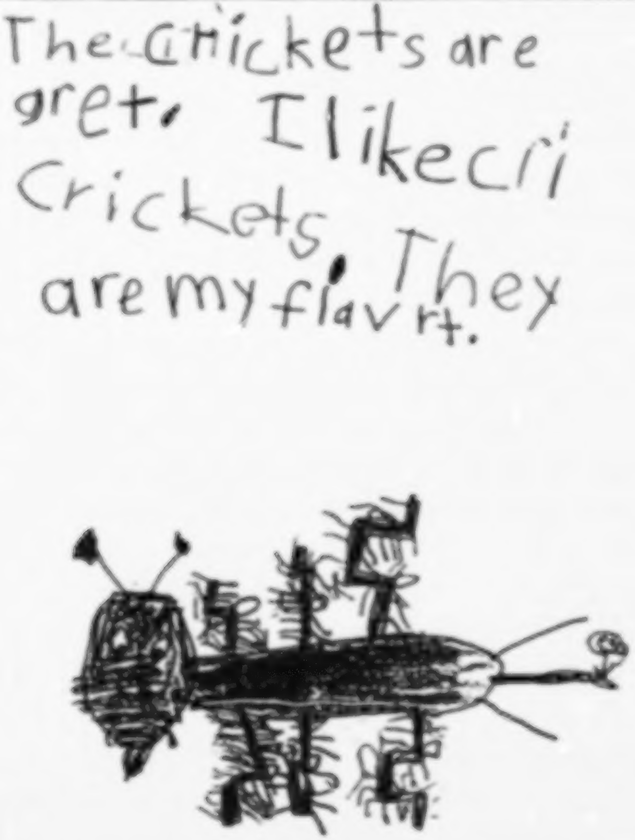
Figure 4. An example of voice in Samuel's writing as he expressed his feelings.



The crickets are
gret. I like cri
Crickets. They
are my flavrt.

His use of "you" showed audience awareness as he posed a question to his readers.

When offered a choice, Samuel always chose to write nonfiction. Many of his texts were about animals such as snakes, sharks, tigers and mice. Figure 6 displays Samuel's reaction to genre preference. This response occurred during the final phase of the study.

Samuel enjoyed writing for the kindergarten audience. He chose to write his tiger book for them because, as he put it: "I thought they'd want to know about white tigers. They probably don't know about them." Writing for younger children boosted his confidence as he taught them something he guessed they did not know. Figure 7 was his rationale in writing.

The attention and feedback that Samuel received from various audiences throughout the school year as he presented his texts gradually provided the reassurance that Samuel needed. As the year progressed, Samuel started to take risks and worked harder on his writing. He was one of the children that

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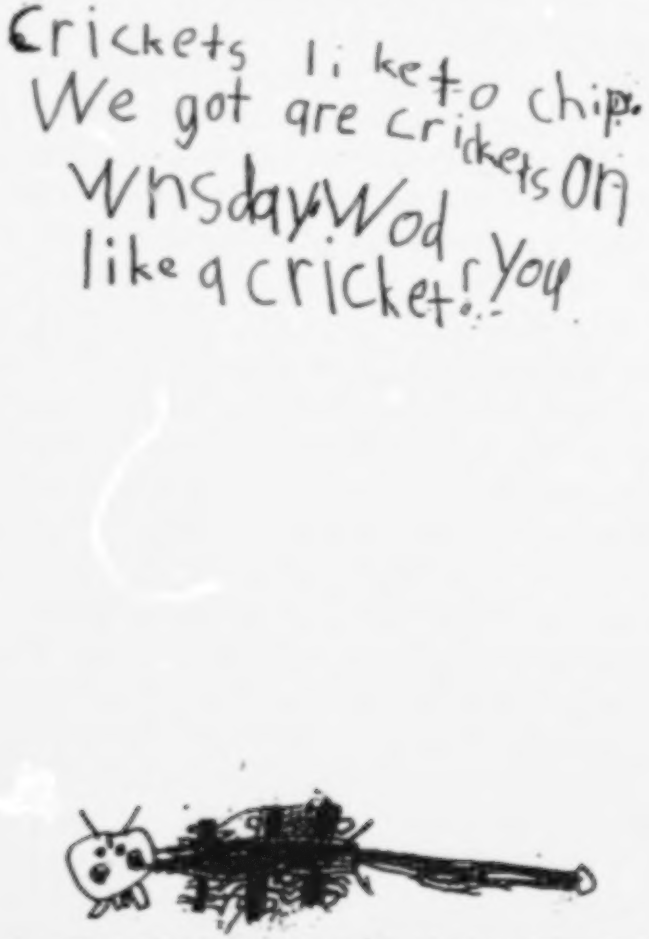
Figure 5. An example of voice in Samuel's writing as he addresses audience.



Crickets like to chip.
We got are crickets on
Wnsday. Wod
like a cricket!? You

begged for more time to write as he carried his texts to the playground, to his home and back to school. Audience, as well as the exposure to quality literature in a variety of genres and a supportive classroom context, provided the purpose and motivation Samuel needed and had a positive effect on his development as a writer. During the final phase of this study during an interview, Samuel was asked what part of writing he liked best. Without hesitation, Samuel responded, "I like when I read my books to the kindergarten kids best . . . I get all wound up, because I'm so excited!" While most of his peers preferred to share their writing with their classmates, Samuel enjoyed the younger audience, because he could teach them new things with his nonfiction texts. Assuming this role boosted his confidence.

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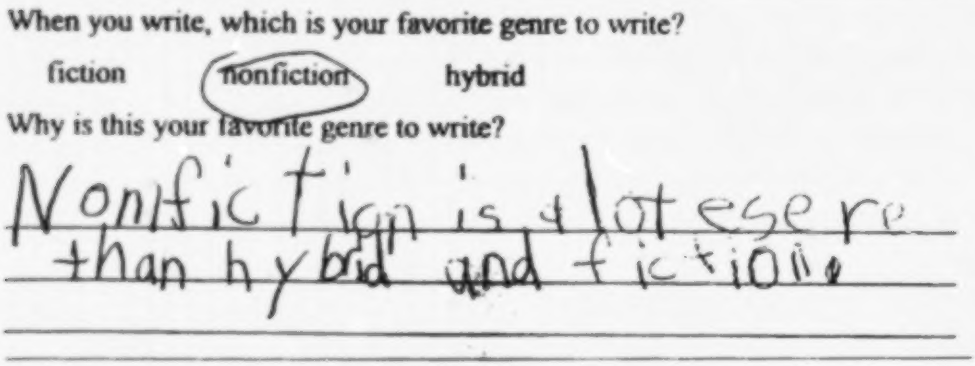
Figure 6. Samuel's expression of genre preference.



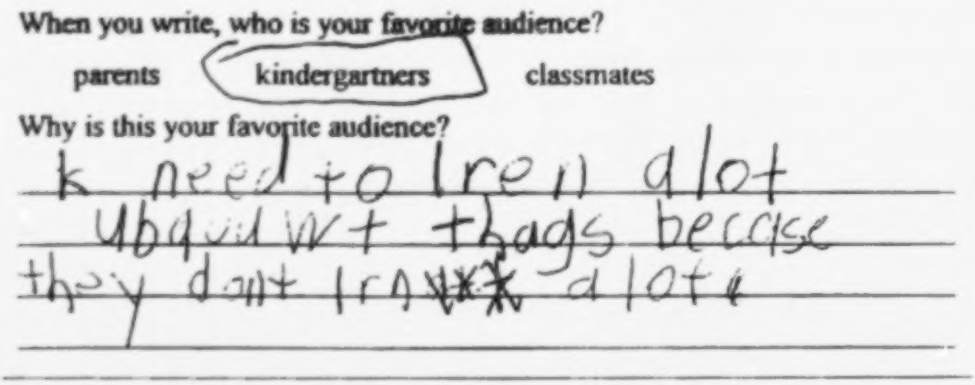
When you write, which is your favorite genre to write?

fiction [✓ nonfiction] hybrid

Why is this your favorite genre to write?

Nonfiction is alot esere than hybrid and fiction.

Figure 7. Samuel's expression of audience preference.



When you write, who is your favorite audience?

parents [✓ kindergartners] classmates

Why is this your favorite audience?

k need to lren alot ubquwrt thags beccise they dont lrn alot.

Like many of his classmates, Samuel's writing development was not always linear. It did not always follow a fixed order. One day he would show evidence of audience awareness, but the next day he might give a very global response to questions regarding his intended audience such as, "I wrote it for everybody in the whole world." Samuel's growth as a writer supported Calkins (1994) conclusion that it should not be assumed that children's writing will develop in any fixed order, because they have different experiences, perceptions and learning styles.

The inconsistency in Samuel's awareness of audience could also be attributed to the stage of his cognitive development. As explained by Vygotsky (1986) in a discussion of Piaget's theory, Piaget proposed that the social instinct is late in developing. "He saw egocentrism as all-pervading before the age of seven . . . After seven or eight, when socialized thinking begins to take shape, the egocentric features do not suddenly disappear" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 19). Samuel was eight years old and entering the concrete cognitive stage. The socialization of this classroom and the responses of various audiences served as scaffolding devices for his ability to consider the perspective of other people.

At the beginning of the school year Samuel's writing was immature, and he wrote only for himself. He did not feel good about himself as a reader or writer. As Samuel shared his texts with different audiences, he gradually gained confidence in his ability to communicate with other people through his writing. This confidence was a great motivator and his time on task increased dramatically. Samuel learned that being an author was hard work, but extremely enjoyable and satisfying. He started to understand the concept of audience and enjoyed the attention and affirmation various audiences provided. At first his concept of audience was very generic, but gradually the adaptations he made in his texts for specified audiences became more precise and focused as he spoke directly to the audience in his writing, simplified words for the younger audience, and chose the writing topic to meet the interests of a given audience. As Samuel's sense of audience was refined, the quality of voice in his writing improved. Voice is difficult to define, but as Samuel talked directly to his audience in his texts, his unique personality was reflected in his writing. By the end of the first semester Samuel demonstrated an understanding of both fiction and nonfiction genres. Before the year ended he knew he preferred to construct nonfiction texts and could present a rationale to support this preference. He enjoyed learning more about the world around him and reporting this information to others, especially younger children. It became clear that Samuel knew his purpose for writing as well as the intended audience. At the conclusion of the school year, Samuel was well on his way to full literacy development.

Implications

As I reflect on Samuel's development as a writer during one school year, several important implications for classroom practice emerge. When he was allowed some choices in his writing his motivation to write increased. Samuel was curious about many things such as animals. When he was allowed to choose an animal he knew a little about, encouraged to seek new information, write about it, and share his text with an audience, he gained confidence in himself. Samuel loved nonfiction books, and becoming the "class expert" on a given topic empowered him as a writer. So we need to sometimes offer children choice of topic and the opportunity to share their writing with a variety of audience. The feedback from real audiences provides purpose for writing.

Samuel's development as a writer also serves as a reminder that reluctant readers and immature writers should not be underestimated by educators. Early in the year there was already evidence of interesting decision making in Samuel's texts for different categories of audience. He included humor to entertain, a persuasive rationale to support his wishes and simplified words and more illustrations for a younger audience. Siemens (1996) emphasized the importance of teachers believing that any classroom can become a room full of writers. Children should be encouraged to discover their own needs to write. I believe that children can function as authors in a place where they are exposed to quality literature representing a variety of genres, given time and the freedom to choose topics and an audience. Newkirk (1989) said it is the "Pygmalion" effect; "When children are treated as writers, they think of themselves as writers and pretend their way into literacy" (p. 30).

Samuel demonstrated that children's writing development is not always linear. We should not be surprised or discouraged when gains in writing competency lack consistency. As explained by Calkins (1994), the differences in children's cognitive development , experiences, perceptions, learning styles, and unique personalities offer an explanation for the recursive nature of children's writing development.

Finally, the story of Samuel reminds us of the importance of classroom cultures that support talking, listening and social interaction. First Samuel could talk about possible adaptations to his texts for a specific audience. Then gradually, he could implement these ideas into his texts. We need to listen to children and teach them to listen to one another. The feedback from a variety of audience provides the motivation for even young writers to successfully engage in the complex task called writing.

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